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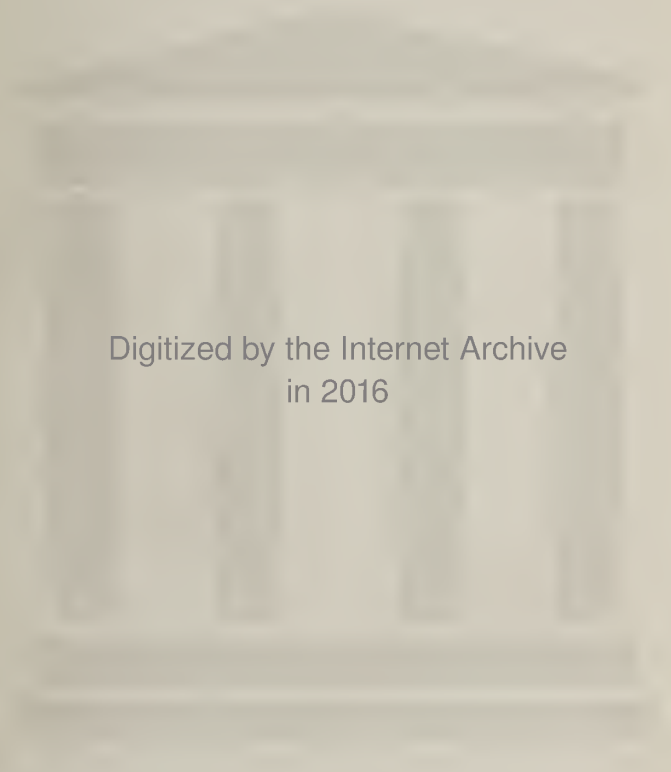

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CHINA AS I SAW IT

Frontispiece. TEMPLE AT TENG-CHEO-FU.

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CHINA AS I SAW IT

A WOMAN'S LETTERS FROM
THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE

BY
A. S. ROE

WITH 39 ILLUSTRATIONS

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FOREWORD

I SHOULD like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to those who, either consciously or unconsciously, have helped in the "making" of this book.

Amongst the former I would include those who have permitted me to use their sketches and photographs, and amongst the latter the members of the China Inland and other missions through whose hospitality we were enabled to stay in places where native accommodation would have been worse than indifferent, and to whose intimate knowledge of the language and the people we owe much of the interest of our travels and their comparative freedom from dangers and difficulties.

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CHINA AS I SAW IT

Shanghai,

May 27th, 1907.

Dear Joan,

Here we are actually in China, but it is uncommonly difficult to realise. Imagine yourself transported hither on the magic carpet of the *Arabian Nights*. You wonder, perhaps, where you are. Crossing a magnificent bridge over a river that consists half of brown mud and half of brown boats—junks and sampans—you stray into beautiful gardens of velvet lawns and bright flower-beds in which are English children and English nurses. There is even an English policeman in khaki uniform, and for the moment you think yourself back in England.

Walk down the riverside "Bund" under the trees and look across at the stately mansions, the banks, and the clubs, and the Custom House, and you will see the last new thing in motor-cars whizzing down the street; the passers-by are talking German, or Italian, or American, and you fancy yourself in some Continental city; but there are unfamiliar touches, the Japanese rickshaws, for instance, and the Shanghai wheelbarrows, and the Sikh policeman.

You go on a bit further and find yourself in France. There are French names over the shops, French people on the pavement, Parisian "fiacres" in the streets, and a French air about the houses; but the policemen wear "queues," and in spite of their French uniforms are evidently Chinese. Persevere and you will come to China.

You started from something very like China, by the way, on the other side of the bridge, but I forgot to mention the fact, and by this time you are surrounded by tumble-down shops, and houses like decayed stables; and the long-"queued" natives in cotton-cloth garments of cornflower blue, who have never been wholly lacking, increase tremendously in numbers, and swarm over street and pavement.

There are no motor-cars any longer, but plenty of wheelbarrows, and the wheelbarrow—the Shanghai "hansom" as they call it—is a typical feature. It consists of a wheel and very little else, and can carry half a ton of luggage or a whole family party. The great point to be considered is the balance, and it is no uncommon sight to see a sturdy pig securely roped to the ledge on one side of the wheel, whilst one or more adults balance its weight on the other. When the load is heavy the barrow man strains every muscle, and staggers under its weight. It waggles ominously. Every moment one fears it will turn over altogether, but it never does.

Then there are the burden bearers—men with bamboo poles across their shoulders, from either end

THE SHANGHAI "HANSOM"

From Drawings by Native Artists.

A COMMON SIGHT IN CHINA

of which heavy loads are suspended, men carrying portable barber shops, portable kitchens and restaurants, portable anything, in fact. They say you have only got to give a Chinese a pole and a bit of rope, and there is nothing that he will not be able to move—if you give him time. Men are cheaper than horses in Shanghai, though horses are cheap enough, and a heavily laden cart—a thing like a raft on wheels—will be drawn along by a straining, perspiring team of bare-backed men.

The Sikhs in khaki uniforms at the corners of the streets are superbly fine and large, and blissfully unperturbed. Their brilliant turbans of scarlet, red, or pink—bright spots of colour above the crowd—remind one of stately poppies in a field of cornflowers; not that the stolid Celestial is very much like a cornflower, but the everlasting cornflower blue of his cotton-cloth garments provokes the comparison. Some of them are not of cotton cloth, by the way, but of rich brocaded silk; even so the favourite colour is blue.

At home one would expect these grandly attired, stately looking creatures to dwell in lordly mansions. Possibly some of them do. In the residential streets of Shanghai there are many magnificent houses inhabited by wealthy Chinese—retired officials, etc., who, having feathered their own nests, escape from the extortions of their successors by dwelling under British rule. But it is only a very few comparatively who care to appear wealthy, and if you chance to notice the wearer of an especially beautiful brocade

go back to his abode, you will probably be amazed to see him disappear up a damp and odoriferous passage, like a back entrance to a stable mews, and enter in at a musty, dingy dwelling-place. If you glance in through the open door you will most likely see nothing but a blank wall, as the inner door, to be correct, must open at right angles in order to keep off evil spirits. Probably in that shadowy background there are quite a number of people peering out to see who is coming in. They are members of the brocaded gentleman's family.

We went out to dinner the other night at the home of some of those well-to-do Chinese. The daughter of the house had been educated in England, and was a friend of Kay's—Kay, my sister-in-law, under whose wing, as you know, we have come to China. I bethought me of the stable mews as we turned out of a busy thoroughfare into one of those unspeakably obnoxious passage ways and round a corner. Most things in China are round a corner! We felt our way—it was getting dark—up a step and down a step, through a shadowy archway, and across a clumsily paved court till we arrived at a door in a wall. This led into a tiny courtyard. The guest-hall was divided from the courtyard by large doors with glass panels, in style of architecture akin to that of an English coach-house plus glass panels (or they might have been paper panels) to the coach-house doors.

We were distinctly late, but in China it seems there is no necessity for punctuality at a dinner-party. The

usual plan is to arrive an hour or two before dinner, and come away the moment the last mouthful has been swallowed. The guest-hall seemed crowded with people and tables. I perceived Kay with folded hands hugging her fifth rib in the approved Chinese style, bowing vigorously with many ejaculations in front of a young Chinese—the son of the house—who was also bowing vigorously, also with ejaculations, also with folded hands; but being a man, he raised his hands before him and see-sawed the air with them. The ladies clustered at the back of the room, and evidently did not expect any attention until the greeting with the lord and master was over.

Finally we placed ourselves formally in seats—solid chairs of dark wood, ranged with their backs against the wall. (The Chinese, by the way, very much object to our untidy way of littering chairs about the room.) Conversation, however, would have been distinctly at a low ebb had it not been for Kay's fluent Chinese, for our host's English was of uncertain quantity. He filled up the gaps in his vocabulary, however, by genial smiles, and all went blissfully.

When at last we were bidden to the feast there was no longer any need for conversation. People have not much time for talking at a Chinese meal. It reminded me of some amusing game: the large round table covered with Lilliputian dishes, the size of a doll's dinner service, or very little larger, and before each guest a pair of chop-sticks and a china spoon shaped like a tea-scoop.

This, fortunately, was a quiet family dinner, not a feast, hence the rice—the duplicate of our bread—was brought in at the beginning instead of the end. A delicate porcelain basin heaped to the brim was placed before each guest, and with its advent all stiffness and formality was cast aside. Everybody seized their chop-sticks and dug them vigorously into any dish that appealed to them, dragging out lumps of the contents, and spilling the half of them possibly on the polished wood table (but that was quite "en règle"), and dumping their booty either into their own basins or their neighbour's. To be polite the first tit-bit, or any especially succulent morsel, should be awarded to the neighbour.

The novice smiles bravely and eats courageously as far as the chop-sticks will permit, but chop-sticks on a first trial are as unmanageable as Alice's flamingo croquet mallet. The new-comer's usual mistake is to hold them too tightly and too low down. It is also difficult for a beginner to finish the contents of his or her rice-bowl. No sooner is the end in view than a well-intentioned friend throws some fresh dainty into the last layer of rice, and vigorous protests are mistaken for polite thanks. And perhaps the most difficult thing of all is to remember to make sufficient noise while one is eating. To sip and "suzzle" loudly is taken as a mark of appreciation!

Strange mixtures were in those Lilliputian dishes—shrimps smeared with green paste tasting of Gregory's rhubarb powder, fishes' fins fried in lamp oil, sugared

pork and bamboo shoots, lotus bulbs and shredded ham and chicken—gravies rich and juicy, and throughout that indescribable taste of mouse-traps and black-beetles in which one recognises the familiar smell of a Chinese street. The tea came last, green tea, appallingly wry, but served in exquisite old rose cups on gilded stands.

The table, covered with greasy litterings, was wiped over with a damp cloth and the refuse matter sent on to the floor, whilst before the advent of the tea, towels steamed in boiling water were handed round with which to wipe our hands *and faces*. I have wondered sometimes whether the Chinese share the Japanese view and think that we, the foreign barbarians, " are dirty "—" dirty, lazy, and superstitious," isn't that the Japanese version ? In some of their ways the Chinese, taken as a whole, are cleaner than we are. What do you think, for instance, of this washing performance at the end of dinner, and how about the " tongue-scraper " which I bought the other day, and which most well-brought-up Chinese use as regularly as we use tooth-brushes ? On the other hand, in the muddy waters of the Suchow Creek here at Shanghai, they will wash clothes and vegetables indiscriminately ; and the floor under the table in a Chinese guest-hall is literally unspeakable after dinner is over, and not immaculate even to begin with.

In spite of all, however, I found my first experience of a Chinese meal distinctly amusing, though it

lacked some of the spicy details which I hear of at other people's dinners. Imagine a dish of "garden worms," deliciously cooked, no doubt, but a "worm's a worm for a' that"; and even more revolting than worms, the "pièce de résistance" at a dinner given by a wealthy Chinese merchant to the foreign members of his firm. At either end of the table a couple of rice basins were turned upside down; these basins were seen to move now and again rather suspiciously, and when the last course of a very elaborate dinner was over, the basins were taken away at a given signal, and for one brief moment the table swarmed with tiny live crabs scuttling in every direction. It was only for a moment, however. With more speed than dignity, the chop-sticks of the epicures arrested the hurried flight of the escaped prisoners, and, dipping the unhappy creatures into the inevitable black sauce, raised them in a state of—let us hope quiescence—to their epicurean mouths.

I forgot to mention the black sauce, by the way. They tell me it is the basis of our Worcester sauce in England, and no Chinese dinner is complete without it. It appears on every dinner-table, and the Chinese use it with their food and think it delicious. To me it accentuated the black-beetle flavour, which, however, they say one gets used to.

I suppose everyone who comes to China talks of the "swarming numbers" of the Chinese, although, according to one eminent authority of the present time, the population of the country as a whole is said

to have been overstated. I like to watch the crowd coming and going. In some of the less foreignised streets it seems to fill up the whole roadway from side to side. It is a comfort to know that there is work enough and to spare after the condition of things in our homeland. As one watches their inscrutable faces and notices their purposeful ways and unwearying perseverance, one realises what a power they might be, and *will* be, perhaps, some day. They are numbered—and no wonder—amongst the three great peoples of the future. The Westerner comes and goes, flitting over the surface of things, restless and hurried like a buzzing bee. He gathers his honey, it is true, but drops some of it in passing, which the thrifty Celestial turns to his own account and smiles inscrutably. He can afford to bide his time. He is patient—it is another of his characteristics.

This afternoon we went to see these thrifty celestials in their own haunts. We paid a visit to the native city, the old original city of Shanghai, very nearly the same to-day as it has been for many hundreds of years, and I think one realises there something of the obstacles which still stand in the way of progress. We dismounted from our rickshaws outside the gates, and, joining the ever-flowing stream of Chinese, crossed the little bridge which spans the moat and entered in at the massive black gates, studded with huge nails like the gates of an old Norman castle, in great stone walls blackened with age. Inside the gates poor leprous beggars crouched in the shadows ap-

pealing for alms. We had entered into the eerie haunts of fear and superstition.

Our path swerved suddenly to the left, and led us by a deviating way to the inner gates. Had we been wandering spirits bent on mischief we should have been considerably baffled at this unexpected turn, for, according to theory, evil spirits always fly straight. Hence the inner gates of a city are at right angles or some kind of an angle to the outer. A narrow stone-flagged passage led us down under the shadow of the wall, then, turning suddenly, plunged us into a narrow alley-way oozing with blue-gowned people and gay-coloured shops—tiny one-storied shops, shops of jade and ivory, silk and silver, bristling with shop-signs and scrolls and hanging lanterns—chiefly red and gold. There was just room enough to walk, hardly more. Now and again the people in the crowd pressed back one against the other to let a sedan-chair be carried by—a bright green chair, covered in on every side so that none might see who sat therein.

The contents of some of the little shops filtered out on to the flagstones of the alley-way. In the restaurants—dark hovels with mud floors and dirty tables—culinary operations on rough brick stoves, half in the shops and half out, were going on in full view of the passers-by; and in a dyer's establishment close to, cloth was publicly undergoing the process of being dyed blue. On the other hand, there were places of merchandise which seemed at first sight to have nothing to sell; the wares, probably silk or some-

thing of the kind, were kept out of sight in the shadowy background, wrapped in paper and put away on shelves.

Most of the shops were uncommonly dark—too much light is dangerous and might tempt evil spirits to fly in and take up their abode. And whitewash is unlucky, as white is the colour of mourning. These evil spirits give the shop people no end of trouble. When the apprentices are taking down the shutters in the morning they must be careful not to talk to each other in the street, or the demons may be attracted by their voices and enter the shop. Then the "abacus" every day must be taken up and well shaken and carefully dusted, just in case a demon has lodged in it during the night.* At the beginning of the year, and on any especial feast day, the "god of riches" must be shown especial attention, in order to ensure good luck.

High-flown sentiments, presumably from the classics, are doubtless considered lucky. Hardly a shop was without something of the kind written up somewhere.

The narrow streets in this strange city were like the pathways in a maze. Somewhere in the midst of them there is a temple and a picturesque tea-house on a tiny lake with fantastic bridges—the original, so people say, of the "willow pattern"—but to get to it we had apparently to turn in the opposite direction, like Alice in the Looking Glass garden. It seems that

* *Chinese Superstitions*, by Joshua Vale.

it is not possible to go straight to anything in China, so we kept on turning corners and finding ourselves in fresh alley-ways crowded with shops and seething with people. The little houses were squeezed up together with never a bit of free space anywhere.

What is done with the rubbish ? one asked. Somebody replied that there wasn't any. The only two things China has ever been known to waste are time and feathers. And another suggested that the scavenger dogs, of which we have come across several pitiable objects, ate up all the refuse matter. Just then, however, the mystery was solved. A particularly filthy pail of water was brought forth and poured between the yawning crevices of the paving-stones on which we were walking. Looking down, one perceived the glint of black water and realised that under our feet lay an open drain.

The famous " willow pattern " tea-house was reached at last; I need not describe it to you, for you know it quite well from the plates. It was picturesque enough, or would have been if only the water round the building with pagoda roofs had been more like water and less like mutton broth. In another instant we found ourselves as though by magic in the outer court of the city temple. One thought of the " tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves." There were the tables of the fortune-tellers and the scribes, the public letter writers and the lottery ticket vendors. There were booths like the booths in our country fairs, and food stalls on

which the one thing I noticed was a large tub full of floating slugs.

In the outer porch of the temple Gogs and Magogs, with horribly distorted faces of painted wood, kept guard over the portals of the inner sanctum. At first, in the dim light, it was difficult to make out more than the faintest outline of the great idol raised on curtained daïs in the place of honour. The city god this, in whose hands lies the fate not only of the dead, but also more indirectly of the living. In the nether world, you must know, there is a phantom city the counterpart of this one, over which the city god, with a staff of phantom officials, holds sway. Due honour and attention must be paid not only to the god himself, but to his attendants—represented by the giant figures in the outer porch—for in the phantom Yamen, as in the real Yamen, the official's underlings must be propitiated if one desires a favour from the chief.

On our way back through the city we lingered a moment in the outer court of the real Yamen, the palace of the governing mandarin. Through open gateways we caught a glimpse of the "seat of justice" at the far end of a long, narrow court, draped in gold and scarlet, where at certain times and seasons the mandarin "tries" the cases that are brought before him. But the very thought of the "seat of justice" in China conjures up scenes of blood-curdling torture and stories of cruel injustice.

The "skeleton at the feast" is everywhere in

evidence; almost more conspicuous than the shops for the living are the shops for the dead. In some of these were houses for sale, the size of dove-cots; sedan-chairs; boats; even men and horses made of brilliantly coloured paper, cleverly fashioned.

Should you wish to give some relative in the other world a sedan-chair with bearers, you would buy one of those and a certain number of paper men and have them burnt at the temple or by the priests.

Then there are the money shops, hung with long strings of "silver and gold" money, shaped in large lumps the size of hoofs and covered with tin-foil. This also is for the dead, for in the phantom city money is as necessary as in the real one, and many thousands, if not millions, of dollars are spent every year in the purchase of tin-foil "silver," great quantities of which are also offered in worship to the gods.

Then there are the red candles to be burned in temples, the incense sticks, the crackers, the lanterns, the paper dragons, and, more conspicuous than all, the coffins—coffins of immense size and thickness. Indeed, one of the most acceptable presents you can make in China is a coffin.

One would suppose that the shadow of this dreaded nether world must take all the sunshine out of this, but no, the shadow falls but fitfully. There is a current saying in China which I have heard given in these words:—

"Worship the gods as if the gods were there,
But if you worship not, the gods don't care."

And gradually in this great city of Shanghai the old order is changing, giving place to new. The young men of the coming generation are not slow in availing themselves of the opportunities offered for the acquirement of "Western learning," and as in the majority of cases this can only be got through mission schools and colleges, they are brought into contact with that which may mean far more to them than all the rest of the "ologies" put together, for in the words of an eminent author * of the present day, "That which China needs is righteousness, and in order to attain it it is absolutely necessary that she have a knowledge of God and a new conception of man as well as of the relation of man to God."

Meanwhile superstition dies hard. It meets one on every occasion and in the most unlikely ways. Close to where we are staying in Shanghai stands the tower in which the fire-bell hangs. Whenever there is a fire, and fires are numerous, the bell peals forth a sonorous warning, announcing by the number of strokes the district in which the fire is raging. For the first three or four months after the palatial new Custom House was built there happened to be an unusual dearth of fires in Shanghai. The fire-god, so said the Chinese, had mistaken the chimes of the Custom House clock for the fire-bell, and, concluding that the city was having fires enough, need not be troubled by any more! How he discovered his mistake history does not relate.

* Dr. A. Smith.

But you will have had enough of Shanghai by this time. I, too, am quite ready to move on. For Shanghai, like the curate's egg, which was only "good in parts," is only Chinese in parts. Wait till we get inland; we shall have something interesting to write about then. To-morrow we go on to Chefoo to shelter from the heat of the summer, and after that expect to start on our travels.

Deborah, by the way, does not mean, and never did mean to go inland; but then Deborah did not really want ever to come to China. She came under protest, and now she is enjoying it more than I am. But then, of course, Shanghai is not China!

Yours as ever,

VERONICA.

Chefoo,

June 20th.

Dear Joan,

We have been three and a half days getting here, because, forsooth, we travelled by a German boat, and the German boats spend the best part of a day at Tsingtau taking in cargo. Tsingtau, as I dare say you know, belongs to Germany, and outfatherlands the Fatherland. It has obliterated "China" altogether and has great aspirations — political, commercial, and otherwise—which, so says the little green bird, are doomed to failure.

I can't say I was particularly attracted by the place, it is too unfledged. The roads are painfully new, the little trees planted along the sides are hardly more than overgrown plants; the houses, and there are streets upon streets of houses, are heavily built and thick-set, and always of two colours, yellow picked out with white, and red with grey. The town, however, is prettily situated in a sheltered bay, and the streets climb up and down hill, which gives a natural beauty to an otherwise prosaic little "German" town.

And Chefoo—what of Chefoo? My first idea of it was a harbour closely packed with shipping and a bobbing steam launch reached by a desperate leap

from a swaying gangway, which landed us finally o a stone quay amongst a clamouring crowd of excite Chinese coolies, who fell like birds of prey on our boxes and thrust their rickshaws up against us in the hopes of a fare — the strongest and most insistent winning the day.

But the harbour, with its shipping and the clamouring coolies, have been left behind in the foreign settlement, and the sketch I would like to draw you of Chefoo is that of a little town circling round the shores of a bay in the bluest of blue seas, nestling at the foot of the hills—bare, woodless hills, rising suddenly.

We are staying by especial favour at the China Inland Mission Sanatorium, a great verandahed, bebalconied house, charmingly situated on the slope of a hill five minutes' climb above the sands, with a garden of flowers around it, and behind it the little road crawling up over the hills with its never-ceasing procession of wayfarers in blue cotton gowns.

There are few sounds in the air save the murmur of the sea and the sleepy tinkling of the passing mule bells, and were I a Chinese I should add the " music " of the scissor-grinders screeching in the willow trees, and the squeaking of the wheelbarrow wheels. There are numerous wheelbarrows at Chefoo, used for carrying heavy loads, and the wheels always squeak. A squeak is lucky, and is, moreover, a pleasant sound in the ears of a Celestial. A wheelbarrow without a squeak is like a dead thing. Someone overheard two

barrow men discussing the merits of their respective barrows the other day.

"Ah!" said one regretfully, "I had a good barrow once. It would carry three hundred catties and sing all the time like an army of crickets."

The sound of the cricket means to a working man in China the happiest time of the year, when the fields are ripening to harvest and he can rest awhile from his strenuous labours basking in the sunshine.

I long to be able to understand what they say—these passers-by. They look at one with a calm interest and a slight air of superiority. Most of them are hard at work—bearing heavy burdens or wheeling heavy barrows, or guiding a couple of mules with a litter. They do not talk much, these men, and what they say is probably not worth listening to; but their calm, intellectual faces are interesting, and, as I say, I long to be able to understand their language.

As a first step I am taking lessons in Chinese, and though I begin to doubt whether I shall ever learn enough to be of any use, the study is as fascinating as the study of some intricate puzzle.

Our first teacher was old and decrepit, and swathed in a blue gown with sleeves so long that his hands were invisible. His method of teaching reminded one of a gramophone. At the beginning of a certain Chinese primer there is a list of useful words commencing with "O, Ni, Ta," and ending with "Bing-Ding." Our little man hobbled to his seat, bowed, and started declaiming in a loud, sonorous voice the list of words

from "O, Ni, Ta," to "Bing-Ding," and having got to the end, began again at the beginning. He never once stopped or allowed us to interrupt in any way whatever. We might repeat the words after him if we liked or remain silent. Our proceedings were of absolutely no consequence to him. Unconsciously we had wound up our mechanical toy, and must wait patiently until the machinery ran down. This did not happen, alas! until the end of an hour. We had engaged him for an hour, and seeing by the clock that time was up, he rose suddenly, bowed profoundly, and hobbled out of the room.

Our present teacher is less intellectual in appearance than the aged automaton, but fortunately he is also less mechanical in his methods. He is heavily built and heavy featured; his manner is somewhat servile, his clothes are old and worn, his cloth shoes are all to bits, his oil-paper umbrella is in holes, and the tidiest thing about him is his fan. He makes up for his poverty-stricken appearance by a slow, ponderous gait, resting first on one foot and then on the other in a manner supposed to be dignified and befitting to a learned B.A. He suffers from chronic catarrh, and uses the window as his pocket-handkerchief, which is somewhat distressing; but his cold, I begin to think, is the only thing that keeps him awake. Even that fails sometimes.

Learning is held in great reverence in China; scholars are looked up to with respect—but all the same are miserably paid for their services. Imagine

about six shillings a month to a Bachelor of Arts for an hour a day!

Whether we are to blame or the teacher I know not, but our progress in the language is certainly not rapid. It is some comfort to think that there is not a Chinese living who can "recognise" the whole of the forty-four thousand characters. To "recognise character," by the way, means to be able to read. But apart from the characters the idiom presents untold difficulties to a Western mind. With a view to future conversations I learnt by heart such commonplace sentences as these :—

"Middle Kingdom talk, speak get come, speak not come?" *

To this imaginary question I picture myself answering :—

"Some clause words speak get come."

I learning slowly, end not attain.†

At this point I change the subject abruptly, as the following is a sentence which can be easily remembered, and ask :—

"He is this in of man, eh?" ‡

It is to be hoped that there is a "he," by the way, to give point to this question, which in the imaginary conversation has the rather improbable answer of :—

"He is outside Kingdom man." §

* Do you speak Chinese?
† I speak a little. I learn slowly.
‡ Is he a resident of this place?
§ He is a foreigner.

But alas! when you have mastered the idiom a greater difficulty still confronts you. It is more than likely that in using the wrong tone of voice you have conveyed an absolutely different meaning to the one you intended. By speaking in the upper level tone instead of the lower level tone, or the vanishing tone instead of the entering tone—it sounds horribly confusing, doesn't it ?—you have spoilt the whole thing, and by some slight mistake of this kind have said river * instead of fire,* or sleep † instead of water,† or duck's eggs ‡ instead of Adam.‡

Or possibly you have aspirated the letter "k" that should have been left unaspirated, and this may make all the difference between a wife and a fowl. A story is told of two young missionaries who sent out their servant to buy them fowls, but they used the sharp "k" instead of the soft one. The man, puzzled, went out and never came back again until the evening. He was crestfallen and disconsolate, having failed in his quest. He had been out all day trying to get *wives* instead of fowls.

In a monosyllabic language of forty-four thousand different characters and only about four hundred and sixty sounds, it stands to reason that there are numbers and numbers of words which sound exactly alike, and very often cannot even be distinguished by a tone of voice. Under the sound of "chi,"

* River, fire = "ho."
† Sleep, water = "shui."
‡ Adam, duck's eggs = "ya-tan."

a certain well-known dictionary gives nearly two hundred different words. Imagine a sentence of this kind :—

"chi chi chi chi, chi chi chi, chi chi ch'ih."

It sounds like stammering, doesn't it ? but it is quite a sensible sentence.*

Did I tell you, by the way, that printed paper in China is sacred ? "The eyes of the gods," they call the printed characters, and the devout accumulate merit in the world to come by collecting printed paper that no one wants and taking it to the temple to be burnt by the priests.

"What's in a name ?" might well be asked in China. Smallpox marks, for instance, are talked of as "heaven's flowers." This might almost lead one to suppose that they are considered a mark of beauty. The Chinese standard of good looks differs appreciably from our own. A square face, large ears, and a broad mouth, for instance, in a man are much admired. In many cases the bridge of the nose is so far non-existent that the one eye can, an it please, look across and see the other eye ! Very possibly the high official in whose august presence we found ourselves yesterday evening would be considered strikingly handsome from a Chinese point of view. He seemed to me strikingly hideous. All the same, I should much have liked to be introduced to him. My companion,

* When one's hunger is keen, one recollects that there are fowls to be had, and makes an arrangement by which one can get them to eat (somewhat free translation).

however, Mrs. W., who had known China in the days when our very presence (as women) at any public gathering would have been an unpardonable infringement of etiquette, impressed me with the fact that we must keep as much in the background as possible, turn our faces away on the entrance of the officials, rivet our eyes on the ground, and give no sign of intelligence.

It was, after all, a very informal kind of gathering. A missionary lately returned from the famine district in the province of Kiang-si had been invited by the Tao-tai of the place to give an account of the relief works which he had been organising for the benefit of the sufferers. The inhabitants of the town—only the male inhabitants (as goes without saying in China)—had been invited to be present.

The meeting was held in a beautiful garden of trees of graceful foliage, softly illuminated by gorgeous rose-tinted paper lanterns. When we arrived everybody was there except the Tao-tai himself—rows upon rows of solemn-eyed men with high foreheads and clean-shaven faces—in front of them an open space and a small table with teacups, by the side of which a rotund and be-spectacled minor official in silk brocade bowed smilingly, see-sawing the air with his folded hands. To Western eyes the smile of polite society over here is distinctly overdone. It is so set, so intense as to lose all the charm of an ordinary smile and to acquire some of the characteristics of a fiendish leer.

The rotund official made a little speech, and, after having waited for some time in vain for the "great man" to appear, proceedings commenced without him.

"Be careful how you sit," whispered Mrs. W. "Don't loll. Sit up straight. Don't look about!"

Suddenly shouts from the street outside announced His Highness's approach. Somewhere in the background a great commotion was going on. A silence fell over the circle round the teacups, and from the shadowy regions beyond the light of the lanterns one of the Yamen attendants, in scarlet dress and mushroom hat (he reminded me of a knave in a pack of cards), darted forward, whispered a word in the ear of the rotund official, who no longer smiled, and dived back whence he came.

The whole assembly rose to its feet, and the rotund official advanced to meet His Excellency the Tao-tai. A long line of knaves—diamond knaves or heart knaves—carrying giant lanterns of red silk, all glowing brightly, appeared out of the darkness, and, standing to one side, allowed their chief to pass forward in state.

"Don't look at him," whispered Mrs. W. "You must not appear to see him." And so literally was her advice taken that I am sure the Tao-tai must have thought the "foreign barbarians" wanting in manners. I heard afterwards that being an enlightened Tao-tai, who had travelled and knew something of our strange customs, he had looked in our direction

and had given a courteous bow. Mrs. W., however, would permit no regrets.

"He would have seen," she said, "that we knew how to behave."

His Excellency was ungainly in figure—his back round and stooping, his general appearance lumpy; but this is the "literary" stoop, they tell me, and the correct attitude for a civil dignitary. His protruding eyes were made the most of by heavily rimmed spectacles—another mark of dignity in China. He had a heavy black moustache—a great glory in a land where all moustaches are forbidden by etiquette before the age of forty, and are by no means always achieved in later life. On his head he wore a hat of the nature of a white cardboard lamp-shade, ornamented by a scarlet and black fringe and a red coral button. His garb was of pale blue-grey silk, singularly beautiful in tone of colour, and from the jewelled girdle round his waist was suspended his fan-case.

The address over, one of the attendants stepped forward to pour out tea from the teapot on the table, which, having "stood" so long, was uncommonly nasty. We, of course, were not supposed to have any, but in our shadowy corner it seemed to me it mattered very little what we did or did not do. The officials, over their teacups, had entered into conversation with the foreigners.

It was getting late, and Mrs. W. was anxious to "slip away." Outside in the road the Tao-tai's escort reminded one of a gipsy caravan broken into

by a Guy Fawkes procession : shaggy ponies standing in the gutters, slovenly soldiers sitting on the kerb-stones, Yamen runners leaning against the walls, sedan-chairs and Chinese lanterns made a quaint medley.

It is curious the poverty-stricken air which wealth often assumes in China. The grand house with its shabby gateway, the broken-down, ill-groomed pony with rope-mended harness in an official's escort, the soldier in a battered "*sailor*" hat, the dirty, untidy shops with mud floors, in which valuable bits of delicate porcelain stand side by side with the commonest of earthenware on dust-lined shelves ; and where the wealthy proprietor sits down with his sons and employees at a dingy table in the back of the shop to a meal of rice and pickles. Rice, by the way, up here in the north of China is called "rich man's food," as it has all to be brought from other parts of the country.

We came across many of these "wealthy" shops the other day in the native streets of Chefoo—streets of mud broken into holes and puddles, with an occasional stepping-stone, between low, one-storied buildings, sadly dilapidated, built with open fronts, which are closed in at night by shutters. The fruit shops looked the most attractive. Never have I seen such beautiful fruit or tasted any that had less flavour. The deep rose-tinted peaches of wet pulp, the golden pears and crimson apples of wood and water, and an insipid carmine-pink water-melon with a green skin—they were all alike.

Now and again a better-class establishment, probably a wholesale opium store or a money-changer's, stood up above the rest of the houses on flights of steps. Through the wide-open green doors at the back of the building a tiny courtyard with a pink oleander in the middle of it formed a picturesque setting to the sombre place of business.

At a street stall near by a man sat busily making paper fans. The wall behind him was covered with bright-coloured paper, like gay "posters," which would soon be deftly twisted and fastened into shape. At the opposite corner, under a giant umbrella fixed into the ground, iced treacle water was being offered for sale, and a professional letter writer leant over a small table inscribing Chinese characters at great speed, while an interested crowd looked on.

Most shops owned a bird in a cage—for luck. Besides which, birds are great pets in China. One meets them in the streets being taken out for airings, and very strange it looks to see a rough, poorly dressed labouring man gently carrying along his cage with its tiny feathered occupant, or sitting on the roadside with some acquaintances who have all got their bird-cages with them. In the disastrous Chino-Japanese war people who saw the Chinese soldiers fleeing through this part of the country say that many of them were carrying bird-cages as well as their bows and arrows.

Weary of shopping, we finally strayed into a native restaurant to dine in Chinese style. We entered a

dirty black shed filled with cooking stoves and culinary utensils, which looked more like a blacksmith's forge than anything else, and, diving down a tiny passage which served as a larder, we stepped through into the dining-room—a small, square, roofed-in enclosure—one could hardly call it a room—in which there were two or three tables of dark polished wood surrounded by high stools. The " waiters " said they had never had " outside Kingdom men " to dine there before, and were evidently much amused. A boy, bare to the waist, his face wreathed in smiles, poured weak tea into small, handleless cups by way of a beginning. Then came the basins of " mien," a kind of native macaroni, to be eaten, of course, with chop-sticks. It was like tackling worms with penholders, but we succeeded in the end, leaving, however, a goodly portion for the bare-backed boy to finish. After the " mien " basins of strange mixtures were brought in, half a dozen at a time—bamboo sprouts and sugared pork, decayed fungi and some famous dainty from Hong Kong—a kind of slippery seaweed with the flavour of iodoform. We did our best and tasted bravely of everything. Then came the bill. Six of us had dined and there had been many courses. How much do you think it was ? Thirty-eight cents in all ! A little more than one penny per head !

This letter has been a long time getting finished, but the weather has grown so hot one has hardly sufficient energy even to write letters.

I think I forgot to tell you, by the way, that I have

changed my name. We all do this in China, and the queer thing is that you have to take one of the names mentioned in the book of the hundred names. In reality I believe there are nearly three hundred to choose from, but that, of course, is little enough. The result is that the same name comes over and over again in the same place, and the head mandarin and the cook and the coolie and the teacher and the foreigner are probably all called " U " or " Li," and cannot improve matters like the Smiths and the Browns at home by adding on another name and a hyphen. When a foreigner takes a Chinese name he either translates his own, if it is translatable, or gets the nearest equivalent in point of sound. My own name now masquerades as " Lo." I will sign myself by it for fun.

TENG-CHEO-FU

TENG-CHEO-FU,

September 10th.

DEAR JOAN,

We have been here a week, seeing something of real unforeignised China, and though this place is only sixty miles or so from Chefoo, it would have taken us two days to get here by road. Fortunately, however, we chanced on a toy steamer, which did the journey in about five hours, and landed us on a sandy shore ever so far away from anywhere; but as a matter of fact, the city was only about half a mile off, hiding behind its great walls. Sedan-chairs carried us through the surf to the shore, and we were borne quickly along across the ragged, unkempt stretch of "no man's land," past crops of millet on rough scraps of cultivated ground and houses of the cow-shed order. Finally we dived under one of the arched gateways in the great castellated wall—built in 300 B.C., and still just the same as it was then, so people say—and were soon inside the city, threading our way through a perfect labyrinth of walls. Whatever else is lacking in China, a wall of some kind is essential. If you have no stone, build it of bricks or pebbles; and if pebbles are not possible, use mud and seaweed, or anything that may suggest itself. The streets seemed to me to be mere passage ways between the walls, the houses

were lost to sight behind the walls, the sounds were deadened and muffled by the walls, the only breaks were doorways within the walls, and the few people one met stood gazing after us, edging up tightly against the walls. We wound round corners and turned at sharp angles, and were suddenly taken by surprise to find ourselves face to face with a little English church opposite a stream of water under the willows, a curious contrast to its walled-in surroundings. We knew we could not be far off now, and another turn or two brought us to a gate under a porch in a creeper-clad wall, overshadowed by trees about which there was a familiar touch of home. That was my first view of Teng-Cheo-Fu.

My next was from the top of the city wall, where there is a broad, grassy, bramble-grown road on which the " foreign barbarians " like to walk in order to get away from the smells and the closeness of the narrow streets. Looking down from those airy heights, you no longer see walls, but roofs—one great level plain of them, the same breadth, the same pattern, two sloping sides from a curved ridge, and here and there a dark smudge of green where a handful of trees breaks the line of roofs ; or a cloud of gold dust in the air, which points out the site of a threshing floor. They are like the old Biblical threshing floors ; the same primitive implements of two thousand years ago are still in use, and just now they are busy threshing out the newly harvested millet.

We stayed till the sun went down and the city wall

stood out fierce and black against the rose-red fire of the western sky. Away to the north the sea lay in shadow, and below us a gossamer veil fell over the dusky grey of the roof-tops and made one vast blur of the whole.

As we sit sometimes in the shady verandah of our hostess's house, only a stone's throw from the street, it is difficult to believe we are in the midst of a great city—the air is strangely and uncannily silent. There are people passing, passing all the time—we neither see them nor hear them. Their cloth shoes or their bare feet, as the case may be, give no sound. There is no wheeled traffic, and the mules treading through the dust make as little noise as the men. Now and again the persistent whining of a beggar rises and falls in mournful cadence, and for three days and three nights, at frequent intervals, in a house not far away there were sounds of loud lamentations as a bereaved widow wept and wailed for the appointed space of time. Occasionally, if money is no object, someone is hired to do the requisite amount of crying for the chief mourners. Tears without cries are of no avail, the weeping must be loud and agonised, so that all men may hear and know.

Just lately a sad tragedy has taken place in the home of one of the leading families of the town. The only son has died from the results of burns caused by the mosquito curtains of his bed catching fire one night while he was asleep. Our hostess is on very friendly terms with the dead man's mother and sister and the

poor young widow. They all live together in the approved Chinese style, in a palatial house not far from where we are staying.

Our hostess, returning from a visit of condolence, has actually brought with her an invitation for Deborah and myself. This is only the first week of mourning, yet the bereaved mother will be "very pleased" if we will go and see her. Is it not extraordinary from our point of view? But, as you know, everything is contrariwise out here, and a certain amount of publicity is courted at times of great mourning. We must even dress as gaily as possible, we are told, as this will be expected of us.

I will finish my letter after our visit is over, as you will be interested to hear how we got on.

. . . . . .

It was the strangest visit I have ever paid. We arrived to find the great doors of the palatial house draped and festooned in white sackcloth. The gatekeeper ushered us in, and silently we walked through an outer court into an inner court, and still further.

At this point some of the ladies of the house came to meet us—dainty, gently smiling little women, with soft, clinging ways. They took our hostess's hands and held them affectionately. They were, of course, in mourning—the plainest of dark blue cotton tunics and trousers, and the orthodox white mourning shoes. They led us up the steps into the house. The poor bereaved mother, a solemn, elderly little woman, with

a refined and intellectual face, clad in the same simple blue garments, with the same tiny white shoes on her poor bound feet, the size of small hoofs, stood awaiting us. She took our hands—Deborah's and mine—in the same pretty, clinging way, and led us through into an inner room—a small room, and filled almost entirely by a coffin of enormous size placed on trestles, and in front of it a table with a picture of the dead man under a glass case and flowers and other mementoes. It was a difficult moment, especially for us, with our limited knowledge of the language. They say, however, the Chinese know a great deal more than we do by intuition. It almost amounts with them to a sixth sense. Let us hope, therefore, that they realised our sympathy to the full, though we could not express it in words.

Out of compliment I think to our hostess, for whom they evidently entertained a very affectionate regard, we were finally conducted into the inner room, the bedroom, as it turned out, of the mistress of the house, a comfortless apartment enough, consisting chiefly of the "Kêng," a brick bed, in which a fire is lit in winter, and on which at night the wadded quilts of the bed itself are laid; but in the daytime, apparently, it is spread with a strip of white matting and serves as a sofa. Round the wall, cupboards like large harmoniums and massive mahogany chairs and tables were placed in stiff and somewhat crowded array. The brick bed made a most uncomfortable seat. We sat on it, three in a row, our feet dangling, as we

were too high up to reach the floor. Behind us a large window with wooden slats and paper panes. Opposite to us another window of the same description.

Conversation, as you may well believe, laboured under difficulties. Mrs. W., our hostess, was engaged in talking to the old grandmother, who had just appeared on the scene. Deborah and I were left with a room half full of people, who not one of them spoke a word of English. We had given our "unworthy names" and our "unworthy ages," and were too shy to ask, as we might have done, for their "honourable" ages in exchange. We had tried to explain why we had no husbands, a matter exceedingly difficult for the Chinese to understand. In my case it was simple enough. They expressed sympathy; but why Deborah was not married—that indeed was puzzling in the extreme. I puzzled them still more, however, a moment later by reverting to one of my lesson-book sentences.

"Middle Kingdom talk, understand get arrive, understand not arrive?"

They stared in amazement.

"You are asking them if they understand Chinese," Deborah whispered.

Alas! I had meant to ask them if they understood English.

Fortunately, at this moment tea was brought in and handed round, with pastry cakes stuffed with squashed prunes. Glad of an occupation I drank a

good deal of tea, but, alas ! my cup, like the widow's cruse, was as full at the end as it was at the beginning. Every time I took a prolonged sip the serving woman approached with a kettle and made good the deficiency, and I finally severed my connection with the cup by smuggling it on to the top of a neighbouring cupboard when my hostess was not looking.

Just then a sad little procession entered the room. The young widow, quite a girl, with soft brown eyes and a pale oval face, garbed from head to foot in white sackcloth, followed by two baby boys of three and five years of age, also in sackcloth, came up and knelt before each one of us in turn, this attitude of humility being apparently the correct thing under the circumstances. The two little boys are now the centre of all their hopes. In a Confucianist family only the male members of the house can carry on the religious rites before the ancestral tablet.

Dreary indeed would have been the outlook in life for the little widow if her children had chanced to be girls instead of boys. Even so it is sad enough, with no sure and certain hope of anything either in this world or the world to come, only nameless fears and haunting terrors of evil spirits and offended demons, and a revengeful dragon whose movements are mysterious, and whose power is limitless.

For a hundred days she must mourn in white sackcloth, humbled and heavy-hearted, but during those hundred days there are many things that may be done. The " seven animal spirits " which have gone

down ten or twelve feet into the earth will be returning some time between the seventh and the fourteenth day after the date on which death took place. The priests will know when to expect them, and food for the occasion will have to be prepared. As to the voracious Yamen runners, who will accompany them from the nether world, they must be kept busy. So for them eggs in a jar and pairs of chop-sticks are provided. It will take them some while to get at the eggs with only the help of the chop-sticks. Meanwhile the "soul" will have time to worship the "spirit tablet" of his ancestors, and possibly also the "kitchen god." *

The priests, if well paid, will be able to do a good deal in one way and another. Finally there is the money to be thought of—plenty of gold and silver must be coined for the use of the dead man in the other world.

Later on, when some of the ladies of the house took us round to show us the great guest-halls and various courtyards and pavilions, we came to a long, low building, through the open windows of which we could see a number of men in white sackcloth working diligently. They had been working all day, and would be working for many days to come making tin-foil money for the dead son of the house.

On the opposite side of the courtyard a pathetic suite of rooms was shown us with especial pride as having belonged exclusively to the dead man, and been

* *Chinese Superstitions*, by J. Vale.

furnished by him in "foreign" style. The chairs and tables, most of them made in China after English models, were crowded and huddled together like things in a furniture shop.

This great house through which we were wandering was built in one-storied buildings round tiny paved courtyards. From one court to another we followed our guides, the little knobs of their poor bound feet in the white shoes twisted over painfully, as though too small and weak to bear the weight of the body. We were taken into a great guest-hall, built like a temple, with a carved wooden reredos on the wall, the framework of ancestral tablets, and chairs and tables of black lacquer, inlaid heavily with mother-of-pearl. The walls were decorated with an ornamental trellis-work and bright green enamel.

Now and then the paved courts changed of a sudden into gardens, queer, formal little gardens, in which palms in pots stood under a solitary tree, and pink begonias, blue and white asters, and sweet-scented white crocuses clustered in tiny beds surrounded by paving-stones. Our companions gathered a nosegay of flowers, and apportioned them out in exactly even quantities to the three of us, one crocus to each. The crocuses were evidently thought a great deal of, and the scent of them was certainly very fragrant.

By this time shyness had worn off, and our new friends took courage to do that which I am sure they had been longing for all the afternoon, namely, to

inspect some of the small trinkets we were wearing and examine our hats and gloves. The gloves were especial objects of interest. They do not wear any themselves, of course, and probably think the custom a strangely barbaric one, though they were far too polite to say so. On the contrary, the burden of their remarks was "Hao Kan! Hao Kan!" (Good to look upon); and I—if I had known how to say it—should have answered disparagingly, acknowledging the contemptible inferiority of my possessions and extolling the surpassing beauty of their own.

Finally we were escorted back to the melancholy coffin chamber to bid farewell to our hostess. The family gathered round us, bowing and smiling. There were so many of them, and they all looked so much alike, that I found myself considerably puzzled as to who was who, and was told afterwards that I had smiled especially sweetly to one of the serving women; but this did not matter as, fortunately, I had not "raised my hands" to her. At each corner on our way out through the courtyards we turned once again to give another bow, always finding that our hostesses had followed in our footsteps, till finally they came as far as the outer gates, and we were backing down the street, still bowing. We should hardly have done more, if as much, had we been in the presence of royalty.

Our visit has evidently been a success. Another invitation has come for us to go again in a few days' time, to hear the Buddhist priests chanting over the

coffin. One wonders how long the coffin will remain above ground.

In a still grander mansion near by, belonging to an official family, the head of the house—a General something—died a few years ago. He was thought so much of that the Emperor had him canonised as a saint after his death, and presented the memorial chapel which has been built here in his honour with magnificently embroidered silk umbrellas. The royal gift also included a hoe and a spade with red handles for the digging of the grave. But the grave was not dug for two whole years. They waited until the baby heir should be old enough to perform the ancestral rites. Meanwhile the coffin was kept in the General's house, and though some said it was not objectionable, others said it was. Probably the matter depended on the way of the wind.

The other day we found ourselves by accident at a funeral feast, but we did not stay. In one of the narrow, cobble-paved streets, under a temporary erection of straw matting, men in dingy white sackcloth were droning out melancholy "bagpipe" sounds from unmusical instruments and drumming gaily on monster drums. An interested crowd had gathered round, and people were swarming in and out of the open doors of the house like bees in and out of a hive. Our escort, a Chinese professor, made signs to us to enter.

Stepping in through a dark passage, we found ourselves in a courtyard, which had been turned into

a kind of temporary kitchen. Everywhere there were cook-pots. Pink morsels of flesh and fish, floating in large basins of greasy water, and vegetables, cut and minced together in messy heaps. Numbers of cooks were hard at work, the smell of burnt oil and squashed ladybirds permeated the air.

Threading our way through their midst, we stepped through a dark ante-chamber into a dimly-lit inner room, the crowd pressing on behind us. The centre of the floor was occupied by a temporary altar, on which a feast of choice dainties in Lilliputian dishes was spread out in front of a glass case occupied by a slip of paper bearing the name of the dead man. Sitting on seats planted against the walls were the ghostly figures of the mourners, swathed in white sackcloth, silent and motionless, and on the floor on either side of the "altar" the dead man's two sons were kneeling solemnly. A group of small, grimy boys—only hired mourners these—in dirty, tattered garments of white sackcloth and long pheasants' feathers in their unwashed hands, gazed at us in curiosity. We could go through if we wished; the coffin with the dead man was in the next room, the doors of which were open, but we desisted. From our point of view, our intrusion as perfect strangers into the house of death seemed an unpardonable liberty. Evidently, in the Chinese professor's eyes it was nothing of the kind.

You will wonder how we came to be out with a Chinese professor. In inland China such a thing

A GIRLS' SCHOOL AT TENG-CHEO-FU

would be the height of impropriety. In inland China, so I am told, even husbands and wives are not often seen together in public, but here at Teng-Cheo-Fu foreigners have lived for forty years or so, and the people have grown accustomed to their eccentric ways. Our learned companion was merely one of the teachers from the girls' school where we are staying.

Did I tell you, by the way, that our hostess is the principal of a large American Presbyterian school for girls? The pupils, in order to graduate in the approved American style, must go through a nine years' course. Besides Chinese classics they study Western subjects (in their own language)—algebra, geometry, history, and physiology, and so forth—and some develop eventually into teachers themselves.

A very different kind of school this to one in an inland province that was described to us the other day. The principal, a Chinese lady of rank, having received a good education herself, had started a school on her own account. Her pupils were any age from eight to forty, and many of them wives of high officials. Eager to display her knowledge of Western customs, she—the principal—dressed herself "à l'anglaise" in a purple, sack-like tunic, belted in at the waist (a foreigner must always have a waist, just as we think a Chinese must always have a "queue"), a shiny black sailor hat lined with flannelette and trimmed with real flowers that had withered away, and lastly, brown boots on her poor little misshapen feet.

" And what do you teach them ? " asked my friend, who was interested in this new species of school.

" Oh," whispered the little lady confidentially, " they don't really *learn* anything, you know, but they like to come, and their husbands like them to come."

" What do they do, then ? "

" They just talk, and play and smoke their water-pipes, and if there is any matter of dispute, their husbands sit in committee and decide the question."

" But what a pity," said my friend ; " could you not urge them to make a better use of their time ? "

" Well, there was one," said the little lady sadly, " who could have learnt if she had wished to. She had plenty of ability, but when I pressed her to study she complained to her husband that she was being ill-treated, and that was an end of it."

There is certainly a pathetic side to this new craze in China for education and Western knowledge in any shape or form. Even the man who advertised that he could " teach the English language up to the letter G " probably did not lack for pupils.

Our Chinese professor made a very useful guide. He even succeeded in getting us through into the sacred precincts of a Confucian temple on a day when, as we afterwards heard, women were especially excluded. We noticed a considerable demur amongst the men at the gates before they consented to let us pass. The crowd gazed after us wonderingly as the

gates closed to behind us. After the paved courts and crowded buildings of most of the other temples, the grounds of this one looked delightfully spacious and rural. The great pavilion-like edifice was painted red, the orthodox colour of all Confucian temples, and stood on a slight rise up amongst the trees on the further side of green "lawns." A herd of goats grazed placidly out in the sunshine, and a great black bullock stood patiently beneath the trees.

After some hesitation the doors of the temple were opened to admit us. Alas! instead of the solemn dignity of the usual Confucian temple—the twilight hall, empty save for dust and cobwebs on the walls, and an altar-like table drawn up before the Confucian tablet—we stood amazed to find ourselves face to face with a huge effigy of the great sage, whose blackened face and hideous, distorted features reminded one of some horrible Taoist idol. And on either side, ranged in long rows down the side wall, were equally hideous though less gigantic effigies of his disciples. What horror he would have felt could he have seen those grotesque images of himself and his followers; and this apparently was the day on which the autumnal sacrifices were to be offered, one of the great days of the Confucian year.

Our rural bullock and grazing goats were now pathetic details of the scene. Another hour or two would see them slaughtered beneath the trees, and as the day passed into night the grounds would be

crowded by excited throngs of eager men. Officials from the highest to the lowest would be there in state with their escorts, and, after welcoming the spirit of Confucius in their midst, the carcase of the bullock would be offered to him in sacrifice, and the dead goats apportioned one apiece to the disciples. Finally, at the close of the ceremony, the spirit of the sage having been bowed reverently away, the beef and the goats' flesh would be shared out amongst the officials according to rank and status. And *this* in the name of the great teacher who condemned sacrifices and all that savoured of idolatry.

Even our Confucian friends—the poor bereaved family whom I told you of—are only Confucian in theory.

This afternoon we accepted the invitation to go and hear the Buddhist priests chanting over the coffin. Such a strange scene! The doors of the coffin chamber had been opened wide, and the little courtyard in front roofed in and gorgeously draped in superb hangings of blue and silver and other colours. At long narrow tables eleven Buddhist priests, "shaven and shorn," in loose grey gowns of some coarse material, sat turning over the leaves of great books which lay on the table before them, without, however, appearing to look at the pages. They sang over monotonous words to a monotonous chant while one of their number beat time by tuneless thuds on a gourd-like drum. Some of the words were Indian, wholly unintelligible probably to everybody present, and

the daughters of the household, who sat by my side, beguiled the time by making a minute inspection of the braiding on my coat and the style of my hatpin, a matter of great interest.

Between the priests and the coffin a table was laid out for a repast, every delicacy imaginable in a dozen or so dishes, especially prepared, not for the living, but for the dead! And in an outer courtyard, on a table set before a scroll on which the name and description of the deceased man and his son and heir were inscribed, an oil painting of the "king of the devils" stood between two large basins of cooked vegetables, sprinkled with flour and millet. The mistress of the house explained that this food was to be taken out and scattered in the streets for the benefit of the poor wandering beggar spirits in the nether world. She readily admitted that the food would in reality be eaten by the living, probably by the scavenger dogs, and not by the dead.

But that did not matter, she said, the meaning was symbolical, and by scattering the food broadcast in the streets the wandering spirits would receive benefit; she knew not how, only that this was so!

I have heard it said that China lives more for the dead than the living. One is constantly reminded of this. Not far from Chefoo people die of cold in the winter with a wealth of coal under their very houses, because they dare not disturb the ground to get at the coal for fear of disturbing the spirits of the dead. Railways were opposed for the same reason,

and though the opposition has been overcome to a certain extent, it is a case in many instances of—

> "He that complies against his will
> Doth hold the same opinion still,"

and many are the misfortunes attributed to the foreign barbarians' "fire carriages." No wonder progress is slow.

As we walked home from the Buddhist ceremony we passed down one of the main thoroughfares of the city, no longer silent grey walls, but a long double line of blurred colour, open-fronted, booth-like shops hung with gay shop signs—red, scarlet, and gold—lanterns and scrolls, and across from side to side a gay triumphal arch (in reality a memorial arch), one blaze of enamelled tiles, blue and green, and gilded carving. The narrow pavement beneath our feet was cleverly contrived of old mill-stones set in pebbles smooth with age.

A quaint procession passed us—mourners—girded with sackcloth, on their way to a funeral. One thought of the old Biblical days, the places of merchandise, the sellers of purple and fine linen, the vessels of brass and bright iron, the money-changers and those who "weigh silver in the balance," Lazarus at the gates of Dives and the traveller riding on his ass, and out in the more open land beyond the market-place the "threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite," and the "lodge in the garden of cucumbers" (only you must read water-melons instead of cucumbers). They were

all there, just as they used to be hundreds of years ago. But changes are making themselves felt even here in this city of 300 B.C.

We passed out of the old-time streets into the school compound, where the forty Chinese maidens, embryo American graduates, were imbibing Western knowledge with the best will in the world. A young visitor was waiting for us on the verandah. Originally he had served as a cadet in the Chinese Navy, but, refusing to " worship " Confucius, he had been obliged to give up his profession, and was now engaged in educational work under the foreigners at Teng-Cheo. He talked excellent English, but our conversation, alas ! was brought to an abrupt close by a messenger rushing in to tell us that our steamer, which we had not expected till to-morrow, was in sight. So my next letter will be from Chefoo.

In haste,

Yours, etc.

Chefoo,

October 10*th*.

Dear Joan,

I have never known such a difficult place to get away from as Teng-Cheo-Fu. We have done it at last, however, and here we are back at Chefoo in a perfect ferment to be off on our journey to Peking, as we are a whole week behind time, and are to meet some friends at Hankow who have promised to escort us up the River Yangtsi to the far west.

We spent a week trying to catch a steamer, but without success. My own impression is that the servants were at the bottom of this. Mrs. W., who happens to be all alone just now, had pressed us to stay a little longer to keep her company, and the servants, being devoted to their mistress, were determined to hinder our departure by every means in their power. We even kept a man on the city wall who was to bring us word should a steamer anchor in the bay. He certainly brought us word, according to instructions, but a trifle too late to be of any use. On another occasion we even got ourselves and our luggage in sedan-chairs as far as the gates of the city, when a messenger came running up to say the boat had gone.

Finally, with some trepidation we made up our

minds to do the overland journey by a mule litter. Here, again, the servants blocked the way. It was the time of the wheat harvest, they said, and there was not an animal to be found, they were all out in the fields.

Mrs. W., however, spoke severely to Hun-Ding-Jing, her right-hand man, whom she had kindly promised to lend us for the journey, and said that, come what might, a mule litter must be found.

The next morning it was at the door, the queerest-looking conveyance you can well imagine—something like a huge dog-kennel or a Diogenes tub slung on poles between two mules—one mule in front, one behind. The arched roof was of rough straw matting, the floor presumably of wood, but Hun-Ding-Jing had covered it thickly with wadded quilts and cushions, so that, by the time we were ready to start, it bore the appearance of a bed made up in a dog-kennel more than anything else. Our other luggage—and by this time, you will remember, in addition to our boxes we had bedding and crockery and food and lights—was packed away, some on the litter, and some on the back of a mule. Still a second mule was provided for Hun.

The first ascent into our strange conveyance was easy enough. We crawled in like two huge St. Bernard dogs, and then turned round as best we could and faced out. Thereupon came the critical moment. Every able-bodied man in the vicinity lent a hand. With excited shouts they lifted the now heavily-

weighted "kennel" between them, and tried to sling the shafts of it deftly into the harness of the two mules. Not a bit of it! If the mule behind stood still the mule in front moved forward, and vice versa. The shouts and the yelling increased, and the litter seemed in momentary danger of falling with a crash to the ground. Picture the feelings of Deborah and myself cramped up on all fours inside it! but all of a sudden the thing slipped into position as though by magic, and the mules were safely attached.

We started off, but it took us some time to find out how to sit. We seemed altogether too large for our abode and got entwined occasionally like snakes in a small cage at the Zoo. We finally discovered that the correct attitude was to squat cross-legged in tailor fashion, or like a couple of demure Buddhas one behind the other. We noticed this was the way other people sat in litters which we met on the road. The motion was distinctly jerky. I believe it makes some people seasick, and owing to the jerk it is almost impossible to read or write, or do anything but try to sit still.

We peered out at the view, but the view was monotonous—a beaten track (called by courtesy a road) through miles upon miles of flat country laid out in vegetable fields. They reminded one of gigantic allotment gardens, sprinkled now and again by a handful of dwelling-places—low, hut-like buildings, protected by scraggy trees. After something like fifty "li" of this (sixteen miles) we drew up suddenly in a

From a Water-colour Drawing.

A MULE LITTER

Travelling from Teng-Cheo-Fu to Chefoo

village street outside an inn. The street and the inn instantly became packed with people. Our litter was lifted down from the backs of the mules, and, crawling out in as dignified a manner as could be assumed under the circumstances, we stretched ourselves and stood upright. Oh! the relief of it, after sixteen miles curled up in a kennel.

Hun-Ding-Jing became master of the ceremonies. He invited us into the inn, and led the way, bearing our rugs and cushions in a lordly manner. We followed him through the inn kitchen (inn kitchens in this land of "contraries" are generally right at the front instead of right at the back), and, passing through a courtyard crowded with men and animals, and surrounded by the inn bedrooms, we were ushered into the grandest guest-chambers on the further side. They reminded me of large-sized poultry houses, minus the poultry and the perches. Time and smoke had painted the walls a dingy black, cobwebs and spider webs adorned the rafters with their feathery lace. On two brick "kêngs" in the innermost apartment Hun-Ding-Jing spread our rugs, and on the wooden chest—the only other bit of furniture the room possessed—he laid out a paper toilet-cover, washing basins, soap and towels, etc., with the deft touch of a trained housemaid.

Mrs. W. had kindly provided us with cold chickens and jellies for luncheon, so we were fortunately independent of the savoury dishes of the inn kitchen which we had smelt in passing.

A two hours' rest saw us on the road again. Occasionally we sought to vary the monotony of the way by walking a mile or so. Unfortunately, however, it was not at all easy to get in and out of the mule litter. The mules, strangely enough, were always averse to standing still. In any case it was difficult to achieve the descent in a becoming manner; one had to shunt out backwards, gather one's skirts together, and drop down on to the road. The litter dipped over like a boat in the water. It was not unlike a boat in some ways. The muleteer every now and then indicated that we were to sit more to the right or more to the left in order to trim it properly.

The day was waning when we reached our resting-place for the night. Chinese are always loth to travel after dark for fear of the evil spirits that have got loose from the "infernal regions" and are roaming about seeking for substitutes to send back to take their place in the nether world.

We entered the inn courtyard under a big archway, and Hun-Ding-Jing stepped forward and led us to a stable door by the side of the finest and most miry pigsty I have ever seen. One quite wondered that the little pigs did not sink out of sight altogether in the slough of black mud. The door led into the bedrooms! the inner one more or less a duplicate of our poultry house, and the outer one partly filled with chicken coops and cattle pens. It boasted, however, a small table, on which Hun laid our repast, and the inn kitchen provided us with tea—very hot and very bitter.

The yard was thronged with people and with animals—pigs, mules, and chickens. We wandered round it in the twilight, and finally came to a tiny black kitchen, something like a coal-cellar just emptied of coals, in which some Chinese women were at work. A small lamp—a wick floating in a saucer of evil-smelling oil—shed its light on a woman, ladling out buckets of soapy water from a steaming open copper. I asked her if it were "Kai shui" (boiling water); she replied it was "food." The room seemed full of people, most of whom were busily engaged in culinary operations over brick stoves and almost invisible fires. After supper Hun-Ding-Jing made up the beds, and I sprinkled Keating's powder by way of a precautionary measure. Alas! it was not of much good. The creatures—especially the musical ones—"laughed" at Keating's powder, and so disturbed my slumber with their merriment that I was still desperately sleepy when a knock came at the stable door and Hun announced the unwelcome fact that the "day had dawned."

We had agreed to start at daybreak, and apparently *without* our breakfast; the mules were harnessed, the things packed and all in readiness. Hun had filled a biscuit-tin with eatables, so that we might feed on the way. I realised with sinking heart that this must have been what he was trying to explain last night, when, proud of my progress in the language, I had answered "yes." It was a case of pride before a fall. I knew he was discussing breakfast,

but had not arrived at the main drift of his argument, which was that we should eat it on the way in the shape of jam sandwiches. We had still eighty "li" or so to go, so it seemed a pity to wait about for a breakfast which, after all, might not be forthcoming. As to the muleteers, they had not even the sandwiches with which to fortify themselves for a walk of twenty-six miles, but swallowed a cake the size of a penny bun, and that seemed all-sufficient.

We had a weary march before us, over a long stretch of desert sand in a valley of desolation by the sea. At last we came to a broad river, on which a ferry-boat was plying. The muleteer divested himself of most of his clothes and let down the blue curtain in front of the dog-kennel. He plunged in knee-deep, and deeper still into the river, the mules wading in beside him. The water swept past with a strong current and splashed up against the sides of the litter. If the mules started swimming, it would soon be flooded—and what then? I pictured the ferry-boat coming to the rescue; but, peeping out under the curtain, we saw that the worst was over, and ere long were plodding through the sand on the opposite shore, and soon found ourselves back on cultivated ground. There were fewer vegetables and more trees, and the houses increased rapidly as we neared the outskirts of Chefoo. Between one and two o'clock we arrived in the foreign settlement, having done the twenty-six miles without a stop of any kind, and the total cost of the journey, as I am sure it will interest you, was about thirteen shillings,

for one litter and four mules and two men, and an inn for the night for three people, and two days' food for the invaluable Hun-Ding-Jing.

A very little money certainly goes a very long way in China. And this reminds me of my "sun-bride." I don't think I told you that I had acquired a protégée at Teng-Cheo-Fu in the shape of a "sun-bride." That, apparently, is the name given (in this part of China) to a girl who has been brought up in the house of her prospective mother-in-law with a view to becoming the wife of the son of the house when he shall arrive at a marriageable age. This is one of the least expensive ways of getting a wife. A very small sum is probably paid to the girl's own people when, as a child, she becomes a member of her future husband's family. If she happens to be a capable girl, they usually get a good deal of work out of her in one way or another.

"Glory Flower," my protégée, is a particularly capable girl, about twenty-one years of age according to Chinese reckoning; that means about twenty according to our reckoning, as the Chinese count one's age from New Year's Day. If a child, therefore, is born on New Year's Eve it enters its second year on the second morning of its life.

But poor "Glory Flower" has fallen on evil days. In course of time the bridegroom that was to be, did what so many young Chinese in the north are doing at the present time: he went off to Manchuria, tempted by higher wages, and has chosen, so report goes,

another wife. His " sun-bride " was no longer wanted. Her own people were dead ; the home of her adoption wished to be rid of the burden of her ; her only relative, a grandmother, refused to take her back unless she would consent to worship idols again and give up the Christian school. Another four years there would enable her to graduate as a teacher. The Mission was ready to pay a certain amount towards the schooling ; a very few dollars were needed to make up the sum required, and once again, as I said before, a very little money goes a very long way in China, and " Glory Flower " was embarrassingly grateful.

To-morrow we start for Peking, and thence to Hankow and on to the far western province of Szechuan. It will be months before we are back on the coast. If you do not hear of us any more you will realise that something has happened—not that there is any reason why anything should happen, though pessimists say that China just now is in a very restless state. In one part of the country they are rebelling against the new opium taxes ; in another they are resenting the educational changes, which have resulted in some cases in the disappearance of the old schools and the non-appearance of the new, because, forsooth, the officials have pocketed the money.

Moreover, last August a comet appeared on the scene. For two nights it was plainly visible, so, at least, I am told, and a comet in China is looked upon as an evil omen. The Dowager-Empress wished to

send out soldiers to have it punished! but Prince Ching advised her to let the matter pass, as in the present state of the country the sight of the troops firing guns might create a disturbance.

I will write from Peking, so no more for the present.

Yours,

VERONICA.

PEKING,

October 18th, 1907.

DEAR JOAN,

Here we are in what is probably the most interesting city of China. We travelled by steamer as far as Tientsin, about thirty hours all told, including two on the bar of the river waiting for the tide, and six more through the dreariest country you can well imagine—up a brown river, winding in and out in serpentine coils between flat brown banks, accentuated now and again by mud forts and mud hovels, and an elongated town built entirely of mud; the khaki-coloured houses of which were low and lumpy and looked like a kind of eruption on the face of the mud shore.

I mistook this place at first for Tientsin. I realise now what a mistake I made. Tientsin—the foreignised Tientsin—has been practically rebuilt since the reign of terror in 1900. It is still raw and red, and hopelessly new and unfinished. The "Veneerings" are there in force, people who made their fortunes in 1900, and money is spent lavishly in bricks and mortar. Numbers of imposing "European" buildings push their way into the best streets, and there are still some "eligible building" sites. Commercially speaking,

the place is growing in importance, but ugh! how glad I was to get away from it.

We travelled by train from Tientsin to Peking, starting off early—*too early*, so they told us at the station, to get the luggage labelled! People with servants (we hadn't one) very often send their boxes third class with servants to keep guard over them, instead of in the luggage van. The third class looked like an open cattle truck and must have been desperately uncomfortable. At the end of our compartment—we travelled second—culinary operations were going on at an oil stove. Our fellow-passengers, however, judging by their handsome silk and satin gowns, seemed to belong to the well-to-do classes, and were mostly men. Some few were officers in Western uniforms of bright blue face cloth and cheese-cutter German caps, under which their long pigtails looked slightly "de trop."

We arrived at Peking, as it happened, on a "lucky" day. Why lucky I don't know, but all the brides and bridegrooms of the city seemed to be taking advantage of the occasion. I am told that it is a significant fact that lucky days generally come in the autumn, when people have more time for them. The streets every now and again were crowded with wedding processions. Picture two long lines of strangely garbed figures in long green coats, flapping in the wind, walking in single file, and bearing tall red poles, from the top of which red and white lanterns hung tremblingly. There was no

smartness about the lantern bearers. They were shambling, shabby, despondent-looking creatures, and reminded one of London sandwich-men. Behind them came the musicians in an untidy crowd, thumping away on brightly gilded drums and blowing on trumpet-like instruments, which emitted a deep bass wail as the procession came down the road—a most mournful sound, but probably in harmony with the feelings of the bride in her red sedan-chair as she was borne along to her future home. She was doubtless quaking with fear, and half asphyxiated. I heard of one once who, when at last the moment came to open the closely fitting doors and hangings of the chair, was found to be *dead of suffocation!*

Although a wedding in China is called a "Hsi sï" —*a matter of rejoicing*—it is very often anything but that from the bride's point of view. She has been practically purchased by a man whom she has probably never set eyes on. It may be that even he has had no choice in the matter. The affair has been arranged for him by his relatives, and above all by the fortune-teller. Should the fortune-teller have discovered that the "Pah tsï" (the eight characters) representing the year, month, day, and hour of birth of the future bride and bridegroom clashed in any way, or harmonised too well, the marriage would instantly have been decided as impossible. All being considered propitious, however, the fortune-teller chooses a "lucky day," and the bridegroom, in addition to the money paid to the parents, sends

in the bride's trousseau and a complete set of ornaments!

A horrible custom is still kept up in some places, which ordains that for the first three days after her marriage the poor little bride must sit in a room the cynosure of all eyes. Everyone who comes in makes remarks, either pleasant or unpleasant, and though they may criticise as freely as they please, etiquette forbids her either to smile or scowl, much less to answer. The poor girl usually looks her worst rather than her best, as her front hair, worn before marriage in a heavy, straight fringe across her forehead, has been plucked out by the roots on the eve of her wedding.

But to return to the streets of Peking. How I wish you could see them in all their picturesqueness. But if you want to do that you will have to make haste, for here, as elsewhere, new things are crowding out the old. The gorgeousness of the scene is beyond description. There are the shops hung with red lanterns and gilded scrolls, and the upper story, if there is one, ornamented with an open trellis-work, reminiscent of the sides of a green-and-gilt bird-cage; the street pedlar in his blue gown, squatting by his magic carpet spread with wares; a fruit-stall ablaze with shining golden persimmons, scarlet pomegranates, and crimson chillies; the ever-moving crowd of men in gowns of blue and purple, mauve or grey; the Manchu women in long, graceful robes of rich dark shades of silk, and wearing the Manchu head-

dress of spreading black wings and bright artificial flowers.

The broad highway is thronged with a strange medley of creatures and vehicles, from the familiar rickshaws to the Pekingese cart, which resembles a great box on big wheels, covered by a hood of brilliant cornflower blue. In wet weather there is a blue awning as well as the hood, but the hood covers the cart, and the awning covers the mule. Then there are the donkeys—magnificent creatures—some of them jet black, and arrayed in velvet saddles and rich trappings; and the fleet-footed, long-tailed Mongolian ponies—ridden furiously. Sometimes one of these, with a rider in long, flowing robes wearing an official hat, dashes by at breakneck speed. This is a messenger from the palace bearing important despatches. A European motor-car snorts impatiently whilst a bullock wagon stops the way, and, solemn and unperturbed in the midst of confusion, long strings of supercilious camels step by haughtily on their "indiarubber" feet, looking neither to the right nor to the left, taking no interest apparently in the affairs of this world, and on their way to the next.

The strangest touch of all is the sudden appearance of a monstrous traction engine from Western lands, which reminds one of Gulliver among the Lilliputians, and lumbers down noisily into the tangled crowd. At the corner a man is watering the street, ladling the water with a large wooden soup-ladle out of a big tub

From a Photograph by E. Murray.

ENTRANCE TO BRITISH LEGATION, PEKING

and shedding its contents upon the road—a spoonful at a time!

Some of the roads in the Tartar city are of immense width. They remind one of the aisles in a great cathedral, a wide centre aisle and two side aisles, divided possibly by a bit of rough ground or a deep ditch and a line of booths. Occasionally a memorial arch spans the centre. There is a magnificent white one, elaborately carved, put up in memory of the German Ambassador assassinated in 1900. The Chinese believe, and always will believe, that it was erected in honour of the *assassin*.

In the Chinese city the streets are narrow, the houses squeezed together, and the colouring more gorgeous than ever. I went there to try and match some silk and had a most amusing time. The streets are mere passage-ways festooned with gay-coloured scrolls, banners, and shop signs and the shops themselves are literally ablaze with gilded woodwork. Queer little shops they are, too, reminding me of the toy shops of my childhood, with their open fronts, green counters, and neat little rows of drawers and shelves at the back of the little green counter, and a neat little blue calico figure squatting on the ground in front, or mounted stiffly on a chair with a long pipe in his hand.

The silk shops, of which there are many, are usually shops in which little or nothing is displayed for the benefit of the passer-by. Behind a long counter a host of young men in the inevitable blue cotton

gowns stand about with no particular interest in customers either present or future. On the shelves at the back there may be, and probably are, rolls upon rolls of choice silk all carefully concealed in paper. It requires patience and a good deal of careful explanation before anyone can be sufficiently interested to take the trouble to show you anything worth looking at. It may be that in this courteous land the request has been unconsciously couched in terms which to a Chinese mind are lacking in politeness, but the fact remains that the answer is often a negative one when very possibly the thing you wish for is there all the time wrapped up in paper in the background.

The Chinese City lies outside the Tartar City, and inside the Tartar City crouches the Forbidden City, the habitation of mystery and power shut away behind its walls—walls the "colour of blood that has dried"—and invisible to those who stand without, forbidden to all save the very few, yet dominating the whole city with its power and casting over all the shadow of dark tragedies of which the half will never be told.

Pierre Loti has described the city from within. He was with the allied troops in 1900; the Dowager-Empress and the young Emperor had fled, the Imperial city was abandoned, and Pierre Loti took up his abode for a time in one of the deserted palaces. He describes the ancient temples half hidden in the great woods of sombre cypress trees and cedars, and the fantastic palaces with their glittering gilded

tiles, the famous lotus lake, once covered with rose-pink flowers, the bridge of marble, "white and solitary."

Suddenly, in the midst of the woods, he comes across a prison-like fortress with double ramparts "d'un rouge de sang" and a moat ninety feet wide filled with dead and dying rushes. And this is the "Ville Violette," where the young Emperor, the "Son of Heaven" (but practically a prisoner in his own palace), has lived through his dreary days.

Pierre Loti draws a melancholy picture of the Emperor's room—the dim light, the closely sealed windows of rice paper, the alcove bed with its curtains of dusky blue, "colour of the night," the absence of seats, of books, of everything save dust and a few coffers of black wood, on which ornaments under glass globes are "standing pensively." The air is full of the "scent of tea leaves and dried flowers and old silk"—"a colossal tomb," he calls the place.

Deborah and I walking outside the "blood-red" walls caught sight from afar off of one of the palace roofs, with its glittering yellow tiles, and would fain have peered in through the great gates to see what we could see, but while still some twenty yards away, an armed soldier stepped forth and waved us imperiously aside.

This morning we came on one of those melancholy scenes which recalled again the shadow of the city of mystery.

The traffic was blocked as we rode down one of the

principal streets in our rickshaws by a mournful procession of Pekingese carts guarded by a body of soldiers with unsheathed swords. How many carts there were I know not, but there seemed a great number, and each cart was full—crowded with men in chains, on their way to the execution ground to be beheaded. Some few of them, strange to say, looked out with interest at the "foreign barbarians." Behind the carts one poor unfortunate, already tortured almost out of existence, was being carried in a basket! A melancholy troop! especially when one realised that very possibly quite half of the unhappy victims were wholly guiltless of crime. One marvelled, though, at the apparent callousness in the face of death of those who craned their necks to see us pass by. It is said they are often drugged with opium or stupefied with wine before the actual execution takes place.

There is less cruelty now than there used to be in the time of Abbé Huc, who describes seeing some prisoners on their way to judgment—the constables, having forgotten the fetters, *nailed the prisoners' hands to the cart!*

Punishments also have been modified somewhat of late. The most terrible of all deaths—the death of the hundred cuts—has been abolished. Those who in former days would have suffered the extreme penalty of the law are now beheaded, those who would have been beheaded are strangled, and those who would have been strangled are condemned to banishment. A Chinese would far rather be strangled

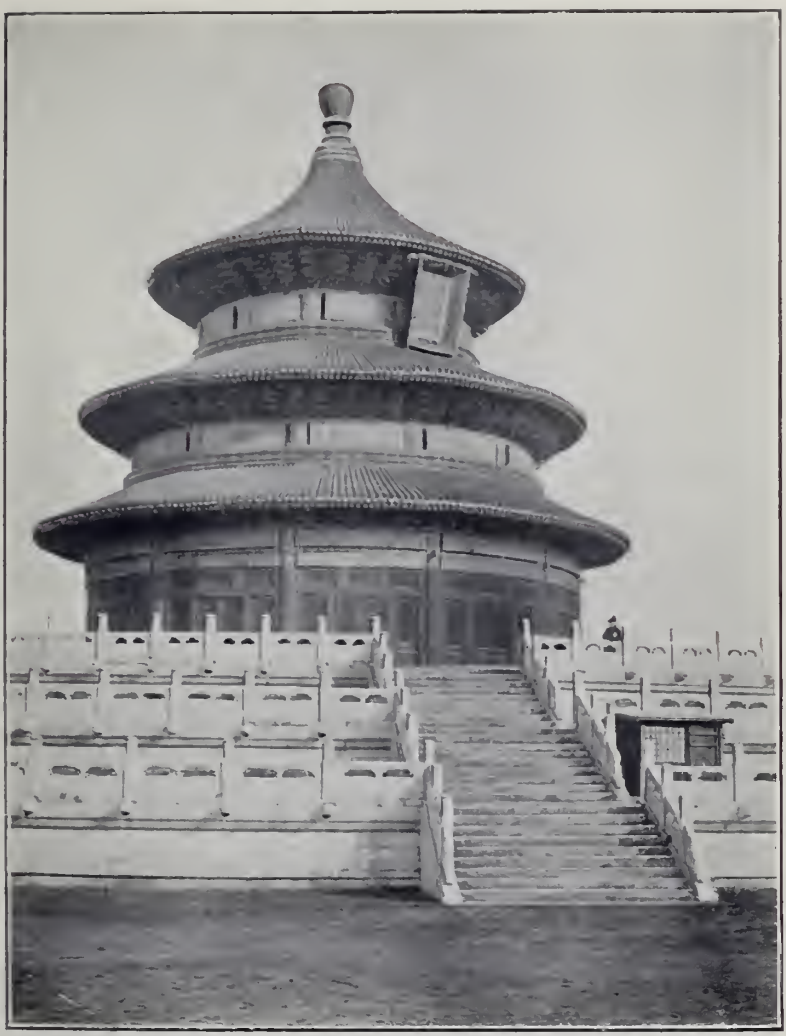
than beheaded. He is haunted by a dread of appearing in the next world in a headless condition. It is the one thing he fears. Therefore his relatives, for their own sakes as well as for that of the dead man, follow him to the execution ground, and, when the authorities permit, sew the severed head back on to the body!

We were on our way from the "Temple of Heaven" when we met this procession of death. I suppose no one goes to Peking without visiting the "Temple of Heaven," and though I know you don't feel a bit interested in temples, I insist on telling you about this one. It is absolutely unique—there is nothing like it anywhere. It ought to be numbered amongst the wonders of the world, it is certainly one of the wonders of China. To get to it from the Tartar City we had a long drive before us, through the Chien-Men, one of the finest of all the gates, past the great wall on which, by the way, six coaches or more could drive abreast, out into the Chinese City, and away through the crowded streets, till we found ourselves riding along a broad yellow sanded road—the road along which the "Son of Heaven" travels on those three days during the year (summer and winter solstice and the beginning of spring) when custom ordains that he shall intercede for the sins of his people at the "Altar of Heaven." When the Emperor passes, it is as it was in Coventry when Lady Godiva rode through the streets, and all "must keep within, door shut and window barred."

On either side of us great wooded parks slumbered behind high walls. The Imperial road, with its Imperial yellow sand, seemed never-ending. Suddenly, however, the long line of straight wall was broken by a temple gateway. Passing through, we drove up a grass-grown roadway under the trees, through the silent park. There were other gates to pass—gates innumerable, but at the next gate we had to dismount from our rickshaws and go the rest of the way on foot. A gang of Chinese gate-keepers barred the entrance, demanding money. Fortunately, our companion could argue the matter in Pekingese. After a stormy scene and the payment of an infinitesimal sum she contrived to get the doors unlocked.

We were all expectant. Now at last we should see those "acres of polished marble" of which we had heard so much—but not a bit of it. Before us, raised on a flight of marble steps, stood a circular temple, one blaze of enamelled tiles of every colour of the rainbow, and this apparently was the "Hall of Fasting," where the "Son of Heaven" prays and meditates before going up to the great altar to worship. The interior of this radiant building was simplicity itself—just the Emperor's seat, an exquisitely carved screen, an ebony "tea-table," and nothing more.

We passed out again and back into the shadowy cypress woods and the pine-scented atmosphere and the almost death-like stillness. We walked on and on, a couple of silent Chinese leading the way. We



From a Photograph by E. Murray.

TEMPLE OF HEAVEN, PEKING

had gone some distance, when suddenly there burst into view one of the now familiar "blood-red" walls, edged along the top by dazzling porcelain tiles of blue and green and yellow, but chiefly blue. The shabby door under an arched gateway opened at our approach, and we passed through into the "Holy of Holies." "The sun in his course looks on nothing built with hands so sublime in its suggestions as the 'Ara Cœli' of Peking." That is what a great authority on things Chinese has said.

How shall I describe it to you? It is immense! two hundred and ten feet wide at the base, ninety feet at the top, and it stands in solitary magnificence, with nothing above but the sky, and nothing around but the grass—a great altar of polished marble, white as the winter snow, rising tier above tier in circular terraces, with beautifully carved balustrades. We climbed up the marble steps and stood on the topmost terrace, a wide open space, in the centre of which a single round stone marks the spot where the Emperor kneels before "Shang-Ti," the one supreme God.

But even as the present form of worship is a corruption of the old, so grass and weeds and sapling trees have pushed their way through the marble slabs of the altar and the crevices of the marble steps, and moss and lichen cling to the sculptured balustrades.

Dr. Martin speaks of the ritual as "*the* most ancient now observed on the face of the earth," with a

" record behind it of forty centuries." The ceremony in these days is somewhat an elaborate one, whatever it may have been in days gone by. On the great braziers at the foot of the altar, not only are animals sacrificed, as in old Jewish times, but masses of rich brocade are offered up, and a beautiful piece of blue jade (symbolic of heaven) is cast into the fire! And before the various tablets of deceased Emperors and astral bodies lights and incense are burnt and delectable foods are placed.

Strangely at variance are these crude rites with the simple grandeur and reverent atmosphere of the surroundings. From the sacred precincts we passed on into still another walled enclosure, to visit the " Pagoda Temple," on a triple platform of white marble, where the tablets of deceased Emperors are kept. The outside of the temple shines with glittering blue tiles (symbolic again of heaven), and the inside is exquisitely lacquered in gold and scarlet. It is absolutely empty save for the tablets in carved wooden frames around the walls. These, by the way, are only copies of the real tablets, which are preserved in sacred seclusion in a closed building at the back.

We retraced our steps through the silent cypress woods, and the last of the many gates clanged to behind us. Sixteen times over we had been obliged to produce money in order to get through. Thanks to our Chinese-speaking companion, however, ten-cent pieces had answered the purpose of dollars.

From a Photograph by E. Murray.

ENTRANCE TO LAMA TEMPLE, PEKING

The " Lama Temple " was a great " come down " after the " White Altar." That, too, is an Imperial temple, and its buildings are roofed with Imperial yellow tiles. They are said to shine like gold in the sunlight, but they reminded me more of yellow-ochre slabs. The great buildings round the paved courtyards were shabby with the wear and tear of five hundred years, and the red paint (composed partly of pig's blood) was peeling off the woodwork. The Lama priests kept cropping up behind corners, dogging our footsteps, barring the way, and whining for money; they made one think of a growth of some horrible fungi; their degraded, low-type faces, their diseased appearance and dirty apparel were repulsive.

Dust and dirt met us at every turn, especially amongst the valuable old cloisonné vases and the grotesque idols with blackened faces which loomed forth from shadowy backgrounds. The pride of the " Lama Temple " is a giant image of Buddha of gilded wood seventy feet high. A staircase leads to a gallery at the back of its head; but we were warned not to go up it, as the Lama priests have an unpleasant little way of locking the door behind one, in order to extort money.

We were just beating our retreat when a low, prolonged boom from an invisible horn announced the approach of the chief Lama, in other words, the " Living Buddha." Our persecutors, the whining priests, ducked down behind walls and corners to make themselves as invisible as possible, but the

" Living Buddha," a man of medium height, with a small, dark face, and tired, careworn expression, passed on, turning neither to the right nor to the left. He wore a dingy, claret-coloured robe, wound in loose folds around him, and the strange Lama hat made of tufts of yellow wool and shaped like a gigantic coxcomb. The two secondary Lamas who followed in his steps a minute or two later were more worldly than their chief. They made no secret of their interest in the "foreign barbarians," and looked us up and down.

After a while the embryo Lamas made their appearance—boys of all ages in mustard-yellow gowns of every shade of colour and in every stage of wear—from those that were almost brand new to those in tatters—and, of course, the inevitable coxcomb hat. The boys came through the court in an untidy crowd, and lined up outside the temple into which the " Living Buddha " had disappeared.

Through the open doors we could catch a glimpse of the secondary Lamas in ornate ecclesiastical vestments passing and re-passing, engaged in some elaborate ritual to the sound of monotonous chanting. After a while the pupils entered and joined in. Poor little " Lama " boys—for ever dedicated to a life which had turned out creatures of the type of the " fungi." In Mongolia, so they tell me, every family is called upon to give up one of its sons to the Church—hence there is a continual supply of recruits.

You were wondering in your letter where we should

go in Peking, as the only possible hotel is so expensive. At the last moment it turned out that Kay had friends here, to whom she gave us an introduction, and we are now staying with them in a beautiful old Chinese house. I expect the Chinese call it a "palace," but here, as elsewhere, the dark days of 1900 have left their traces. This stately mansion represents "indemnity," and was given over by the authorities to take the place of a great building for the blind, which was razed to the ground by the Boxer troops. And the "blind," what happened to them? All except two, who escaped as beggars to Manchuria, were massacred cruelly and without mercy by their own countrymen! The two who escaped have returned, and are helping in the training of the new pupils in the new institution.

The founder of the old institution and inventor of the first (and some think the best) system by which the Chinese blind are taught, toils on patiently as ever, devoting his marvellous talents to the work to which he has given the best years of his life, but the tragedy of 1900 has left its indelible mark.

The house is of one-storied buildings, with picturesque curved roofs built around paved courtyards, some of which are bright with flower-beds, and some have been turned into quaint rock-gardens, where Lilliputian hills, fantastic bridges, and rocky dells play at "make-believe." The great entrance gates, with the gate-keeper's lodge, are round mysterious corners and down side passages. With characteristic

Chinese indirectness one is obliged to enter the precincts by an unnecessarily circuitous route.

Our palatial residence opens into a fashionable residential street—in bad weather almost impassable, however, with deep water and deeper mud, and at all times the receptacle of egg-shells and potato parings and decaying vegetable matter. The public highway apparently acts as a dustbin to our wealthy neighbours. The street is a relic of the old Peking, which is so rapidly vanishing away, and there is a charm about it in spite of the mud and the egg-shells!

The foreignised Legation quarter, with its tidy kerb-stones and trim acacia trees, the raw red railway station, the European bank, American stores—the improvements, in fact, harmonise with old Peking about as well as the traction engine harmonises with the blue-hooded mule-carts and the velvet-saddled donkeys. Western civilisation, like the traction engine, is lumbering down amongst the mule-carts and the donkeys.

Peking has a great future before it—that is what everyone says. And though there are very few Celestials who will admit that the "outside Kingdom man" has come to stay, there are very many who are willing to accept and eager to make use of his "fire carriages" and his "lightning breath" (electricity). Meanwhile one stands outside the cannon-riddled wall at the end of the British Legation grounds and one reads over again the words inscribed

thereon, " Lest we forget." But there is no danger of that yet awhile.

I am glad to say there are still a good many bits of old Peking left. The country outside the walls of the Tartar City in the direction of the " Bell Temple " remains as " Chinese " as ever it was.

Vast flat stretches of vegetable fields, roads which, like Topsy, have simply " growed," no hedges, hardly any trees, no houses except an occasional " cow-shed " behind a wall, which, in spite of appearances, turns out to be a human habitation. We rode for six miles on velvet-saddled donkeys, sometimes on the road and sometimes off the road—there was not much to choose between it and the adjoining fields—and finally made a bee-line to the temple straight across a gigantic onion garden, and whether there exists a more trodden way in or not still remains a mystery.

The *Bell*, you must know, is another of the wonders of China, and possibly of the world. But to an old-time Celestial *China* means the world—" Tien-Hsia," they call it (literally "all under Heaven").

The Bell is said to be fourteen feet high—it looked more—and is embossed with eighty thousand characters from Buddhist classics. It is made of bronze, the largest bell—not that was ever cast—but that has ever been hung. The only person who sounds it is the " Son of Heaven " himself, who, in times of great drought, repairs to the temple to ring the bell and pray for rain. Custom ordains that he shall

remain on his knees until the rain begins to fall: history prefers not to relate whether he actually does so or not. He has been there this year, so the priests told us—only a few months ago. They showed us the suite of rooms reserved for his use—surprisingly fresh and clean, considering the state of some other parts of the temple—almost dazzling, in fact, with white paper and white paint, and white silk scrolls richly embroidered. We dismounted from our donkeys in the outer court, and were shown through into an inner courtyard, and given tea and salt cakes sprinkled with millet seeds, in an extraordinarily well-furnished guest-hall. The kêng, or raised brick couch, which occupied the whole of one end of the room in the usual style, was covered in rich blue brocade quilts. There were priceless bits of old china, presents from Emperors of the Ming dynasty, on black ebony stands, ebony chairs, and carved "dower" chests along the walls, and (a very unusual object in Chinese rooms) a large full-length mirror, in which first the chief priest's servant, and later on the chief priest himself, tried on the cap of the young Englishman who was with us, admiring the effect! The chief priest is a very important person. He belongs, as a rule, to some influential family, and rules over the temples of many surrounding districts. He wore very unpriestlike garments, a gown of handsome blue silk, a sleeveless jacket of black brocade, and white shoes, which probably meant that he was in mourning. He conducted

us himself to the Bell tower, and up the dusty, rickety stairs, which led to a narrow wooden platform, from which we could look down on to the top of the great bronze monster coated with the dust of five hundred years. A small hole in the very centre of the top is suggested to the unwary visitor as a fit destination for copper coins. A coin thrown with unerring aim will strike the gong and make it sound. Needless to say, however, people go on throwing and throwing, and it never *does* sound, but temple underlings who stand below gather up the copper coins.

The chief priest showed us with pride a library in an upper story in another part of the building, by which he evidently set great store. Alas! the whole place was literally crumbling with dust, the books, the tattered wall-paper, the decayed woodwork, the broken floor—all in "one brown burial blent." Through the open slats of windows, where cobwebs had superseded the paper panes, a superb tree with vivid scarlet leaves hung over the broken-down building like a canopy of flame.

"Hao puh hao?" * asked the chief priest, meaning the library.

"Hao!" we answered truthfully, meaning the scarlet tree.

Our time in Peking, I grieve to say, is drawing to an end, but we finish, as we began, with a "lucky day."

* "Good or not good?"

I heard sounds of jubilation in the street this morning, and looked to see a gay procession coming along, not a wedding this time, but a funeral! and, instead of the bride's chair, the coffin borne on the shoulders of a number of men, gorgeously draped in rich brocade. The band played lustily, and the gilded drums, like gigantic golden persimmons, were as much in evidence as in the wedding processions. Pekingese carts brought up the rear, and in them sat the mourners dressed from head to foot in white sackcloth. Every relation, near and distant, and you may be sure that on these occasions their name is legion, can, if they come to the funeral, demand a complete new costume of white sackcloth, and very becoming it is to them—far more so than the ubiquitous blue.

To us, however, this has been anything but a lucky day. All the best hours of it have been spent in—how should you think? Why, in getting our tickets on the Belgian-Chinese railway from Peking to Hankow!

We furnished ourselves with dollar notes for the requisite sum at the bank. Arrived at the station, however, all the notes, except those on the Russo-Chinese Bank, were promptly refused by the Chinese clerk. No tickets could, therefore, be bought that morning. We made another pilgrimage to the bank, changed the notes for heavy rolls of Mexican dollars, went all the way back to the station in a springless mule-cart, alighted somewhat bruised and battered, proffered

From a Photograph by E. Murray

LAMA TEMPLE, PEKING

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the dollars to the booking office factotum, who this time could not refuse to take them, but looked at us suspiciously, and asked us to write down our names in full! Finally the tickets were produced, and then he proceeded to punch them, but the punching machine was broken. We waited patiently; the afternoon was drawing to a close when he finally handed us over our hardly earned possessions. We congratulated ourselves on having listened to advice and bought our tickets beforehand!

We start to-morrow, and when I write again, we shall, I hope, be eight hundred miles further on our journey.

Yours,

V.

Hankow,

November 10th, 1907.

Dear Joan,

China, it is still China, the very heart of China, in fact, but we are living in a foreign settlement again, and the streets seem drearily commonplace after those wonderful kaleidoscopes of colour in Peking. The journey down through the provinces of Chili, Honan, and Hupeh would have amused you. It was like a journey in a dream, so strangely unreal did that Belgian train seem to us steaming away through inland China, across the vast flat stretches of vegetable fields dotted here and there by blue-gowned peasants or a scarecrow tree, a highly cultivated but weirdly empty country! On rare occasions the dark line of a city wall, like the wall of an immense prison, showed up some distance away, for the Chinese will not have the "iron road" or the "fire carriages" any nearer to their homes than they can help, for fear of "evil influences," and the long line of Chinese soldiers ranged along the platform at every station proves that there still exists a danger of active opposition on the part of those who eye with suspicion the doings of the "outside Kingdom man."

The train was excellently appointed. We travelled second class, for they say the only difference between

first and second lies in carpet versus oilcloth. Deborah and I had a compartment to ourselves, next door to a pantry, where hot water could be obtained at any hour of the day, and three Chinese boys were there to wait on us. When we returned to our carriage after our evening repast in the dining-car, we discovered that the seats had been neatly transformed into beds, and very comfortable beds they were!

In the middle of the night we crossed the famous Yellow River, on the bridge which everybody vowed a year or two ago could never be constructed with any success. The shifting sands offered great difficulties. Finally hollow piles were buried in their depths, and other piles screwed into the inside of these; but whether the structure will remain firm or not time alone will prove. The bridge is evidently still treated with great care and caution. In the early days of its existence the heavy engine was changed to a light one for the journey across.

The train stood shivering on the brink of the river a good ten minutes or so before venturing over (presumably while the line was inspected), and when it did venture it crept along tremblingly at a timid pace. The bridge was brilliantly lit up by electric light, and never have I seen a more desolate scene, a great waste of water and barren mud flats, which must at times be flooded by the river. I have heard it said that the distance of the mud flats and the river combined is seven miles across at one particular point. The Yellow River goes by the name of the "Chinese Sorrow,"

as I dare say you know. In 1852 it changed its course entirely, and made itself a new route to the sea, many miles away from the old. In 1887 it burst its bonds once more and tried to force a passage to the Yangtse, but was brought back again at an almost fabulous expense. The common belief is that the day will come when it will revert to its original bed.

By the electric light we could plainly see the swirling yellow water, too rapid to admit of navigation, and on the near shore one lonely patch of light and the shadow of a roof pointed out the site of a tiny foreign bungalow, the solitary home possibly of some Belgian engineer; a weirdly dismal habitation between the mud flats and the whirling water.

Further south the scenery improved. The vegetable fields had disappeared for the time being, and the wooded hills on the borders of Hupeh were intersected by terraces half under water, from which stubbly green stalks were sprouting—our first sight, this, of rice fields.

The next afternoon, exactly thirty-two hours after leaving Peking, we reached Hankow; but the wooded hills had vanished long ago, the whole country was half submerged in water, and villages of melancholy houses built on piles stood in the midst of swamps.

The platform at Hankow swarmed with Chinese troops, in semi-Western uniforms of bright blue, or black with red pipings. Three military bands,

formed on German lines, were playing lustily, but unfortunately they had each of them chosen a different tune. I dare say the effect was considered "all the more Western." This military display was in honour of the new brigadier-general, who had come down on the train from Peking. We had noticed him in the dining-car, with his sharp, bony face and horn spectacles and magnificently embroidered silk gown. The long peacock's feather dangling from his red-buttoned cap showed him to be an official of high standing.

At the station the confusion was immense. Shoals of Yamen servants pushed themselves to the front in the overbearing, blustering way characteristic of Yamen underlings. The luggage van seemed public property. People invaded it from every side, seizing their belongings. The Chinese entrust their goods to it in the most confiding way, small personal objects unlabelled and unpacked are pushed in amongst the boxes and bags. I saw one of the official troop fetch out a small wicker basket containing a couple of pots of jam!

We arrived at our destination to find that, owing to our delay at Teng-Cheo-Fu, we had missed the friends who were to have escorted us up the Yangtse. The only thing to do now is to wait here until some other people whom we know, and who are also bound for Szechwan, come up the river at the end of the month.

Again I don't know where we should be if Kay

had not given us an introduction here to missionary friends of hers, who very kindly are allowing us to stay with them.

. . . . . .

November 20th.

Hankow does not depress me as much as it did. When we first arrived it rained all the time, and had been raining, so they said, for a whole month. The swollen river, the dripping trees along the Bund, the European houses with their wet plaster walls, the watery roads, and the bare feet of the drenched coolies pattering through the puddles made up a very dreary picture; but when the rain stopped the sun came out, and the sunshine here is simply glorious, so much hotter and so much brighter than it ever is in England.

The garden is full of flowers, in spite of the long downpour. Geraniums in any number, plumbago and violets grown in pots fill the air with fragrance, palms and bananas adorn the beds. Across the lawn stands a magnificent tree, the size of a big laburnum, which is one mass of double pink blossoms, resembling in form and colour a pink hollyhock; but the flowers fall off almost as soon as they come out, which has probably earned for the tree the sobriquet of "puh iong" ("no use"). The old gardener whom I questioned as to its real name could give no help.

I found his information peculiarly limited in this respect.

"This piece call what?" I asked, indicating a violet.

"Blue flower," he answered.

"That piece call what?" I went on, pointing to a geranium.

"Red flower," he answered.

We have found our way beyond the commonplace grey stucco houses to the native streets. There is one, a particular favourite of mine, three miles long, and like a picturesque arcade most of the way, splashed with gorgeous colour. The hanging scrolls and sign-boards from the low-roofed houses almost meet overhead. There is no wheeled traffic, there is no room for any, but the pavement is crowded with pedestrians, and the air is filled with shouts of men who, bearing burdens on bamboo poles slung across their shoulders, cry out incessantly for room to pass. They have a way of saying, "Fish, fish!" or "Oil, oil!" whether this is true or not, so that the crowd, fearing to soil their gowns, instantly stand on one side for them to go by. But the men with the sedan-chairs yell louder than the burden-bearers as they force their way ruthlessly through the people, never waiting a moment for anybody.

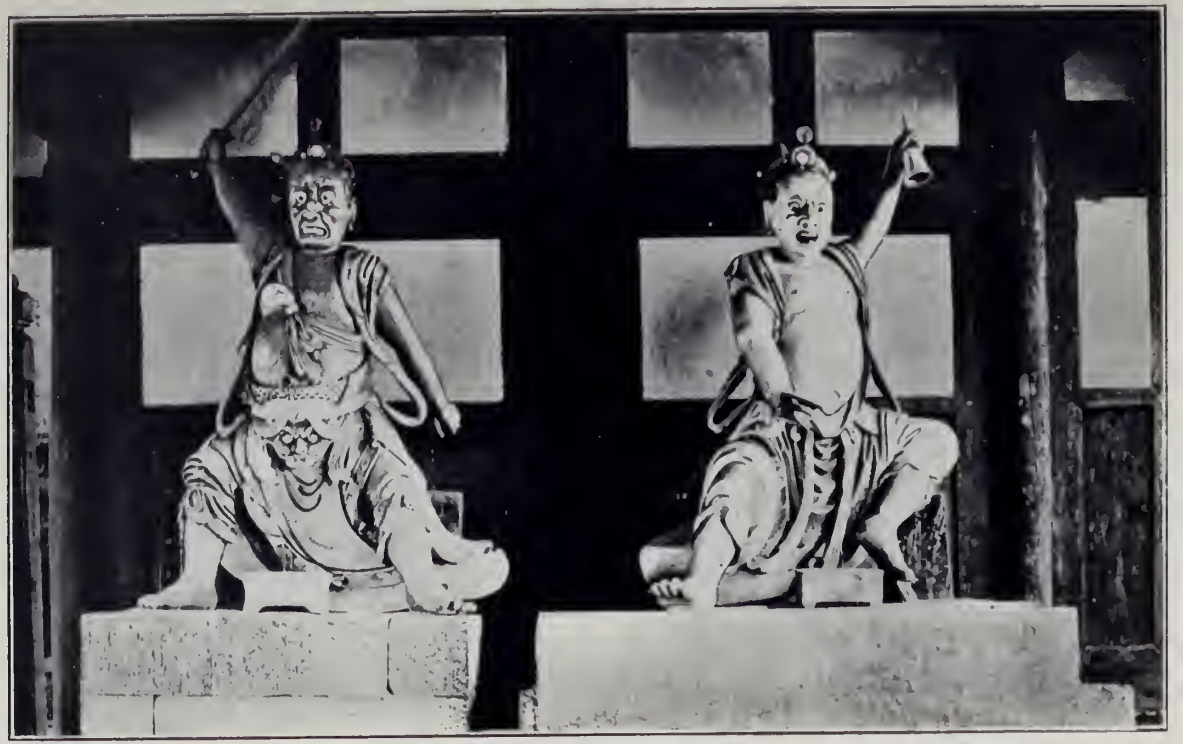
The shops are of every variety, mingled indiscriminately in a way characteristic of China. A prosperous silversmith's stands side by side with a dried fish shop, or a little sweetmeat stall, in which rice toffee and

sugared monkey-nuts hold a prominent position. The more unattractive the shop the more high-flown probably the motto on the swinging shop-sign. Imagine the dingiest of narrow passages described as the "Alley of Virtuous Prosperity," and a second-hand clothes' shop, "Clothes' Repository for Perpetual Spring." A medicine store promises "Ten Thousand Years of Life" to its customers. A jeweller announces "Peace to All." And a money-changer's masquerades under the title of "Happy Life." The owner of a cloth shop goes so far as to assert that "he who opens an account there will obtain eternal joy."

The shops themselves are full of surprises. The walls of one large emporium are so gorgeously hung with gay scarlet and gold scrolls that one takes it for a scroll shop; not a bit of it—its stock-in-trade turns out to be beef, pork, and lottery tickets. In a funeral store, amongst the magnificently embroidered funeral garments, two large green birds are standing in flower-pots. On closer inspection we discover they are ingeniously made of small yew trees, grown and clipped in the shape of birds. The bold, staring eyes and lifelike beaks are formed of some artificial substance, and the whole effect is most realistic.

Hankow, it seems, is only one of three great cities—Hankow, Woochang, and Hanyang—and the three are welded into one, or rather the one is divided into three, by the great rivers of the Yangtse and the Han, which join forces just below.

From a high ridge on the further side of the



GROTESQUE GODS

Han River one can obtain a magnificent bird's-eye view of the whole—the wide waters of the rivers (the Yangtse alone is about a mile across), the flooded meadow land, and the sea of roofs. At first sight there seems more water than land. Hanyang, to the right and the left of us, scarred in Western fashion by the smoking chimneys of the biggest iron-works in China; the muddy waters of the Han, thronged with native craft, dividing Hankow, with its flat masses of roofs, from Hanyang with its chimneys; while the River Yangtse, larger and even yellower than the Han, stretches itself at ease between Hankow and Woochang.

A Buddhist temple stands in solitary grandeur at the far end of the ridge on a height overhanging the river. A priest in a straw hat like a parasol, sitting on the threshold of one of the arched gateways smoking his water-pipe, courteously ushered us in and regaled us on tea and rice-flour biscuits, monkey-nuts and melon seeds. Four grotesque gods, with vermilion and ultramarine faces, viewed us from afar, and in the courtyard a carved serpent coiled round an enormous stone turtle* eyed us stonily. We asked the priest for an explanation of this. He could give none, however. It seems they very seldom can. As we took our departure he mildly announced that the Buddhist and Christian religions were practically identical. Possibly he does not often come down from his lonely temple on the hill to see what the rest of the world is about.

* Attributes of the northern god.

The "outside Kingdom" doctrine has done a great deal for Hankow and her sister towns. Hospitals crammed with patients, cottages and schools crowded with students, preaching chapels thronged with hearers, and a great cathedral in which the trained choir and even some of the officiating clergy are of Chinese birth, show in some measure the results of long years of devoted work. It has been a revelation to me. One only hears half the story at home, one needs to come out to these parts to hear the rest, though the story is not finished yet, not by a long way, but it grows in interest.

We went over to Woochang the other day, ferrying across the river in a sampan. We took one of the Chinese "boys" with us. A Chinese is nothing if not practical. He seized this opportunity of plenty of water to be had for nothing, and busied himself washing his "sheo-jin" (handkerchief). The "sheo jin" is a valuable possession. It is used for mopping the face, drying the hands, for holding provisions, and for tying over the head to keep off the sun—for anything, in fact, except the purpose for which we use it ourselves.

In Woochang we went to see the big American college in which so many mandarins' sons are being educated. In the early days boys were paid to come, and now they clamour for admission; and the fees charged are, from a Chinese point of view, very fairly substantial. The college is conducted as far as possible on the lines of an English public school. We were

shown a library where English books by standard authors lined the shelves. The boys may take a certain number back to their homes in the holidays, and read as many as they like, of course, during the term time. Their taste is much more serious than that of English or American boys. As to novels, in American parlance, they have "no use for them whatever."

From the college we went on to a school for girls, a more humble institution, but one which I am sure does an infinite amount of good. Some sad cases were pointed out to us, which made one realise for the hundredth time something of the miseries to which Chinese children, more especially girls, are so often subjected. One, a sweet-faced maiden, is engaged to be married to a leper. All the school authorities can do is to delay the marriage as long as possible. In China, apparently, leprosy constitutes no "cause or just impediment." Another, a bonny child, is the daughter of lepers. And a third was once a slave, who was horribly burnt by her owner, the wife of a wealthy fortune-teller, and afterwards buried alive in a wall, where, fortunately, she was discovered by friends before it was too late, and brought back to, at all events, a certain degree of health in the Mission Hospital. An English child would hardly have survived, but the Chinese possess great vitality and "power of recuperation," and, considering their indifference to matters of common hygiene, are astonishingly long-lived. They even seem to thrive on in-

sufficient and sometimes unwholesome food. I have been told of men who, in a state of poverty, try to make their "meals" last out longer by eating them half cooked, so as to prolong the process of digestion. They can certainly achieve with impunity that which would probably be the end of all things to a Westerner, and can eat the flesh of a dog that has died by strychnine poisoning with no evil results.

According to general opinion, the Chinese are curiously insensible to pain. A Cantonese of wide experience tells me this is more noticeable among northerners than southerners. He remembers a species of "game" played by the youths in a northern town in which they vied with each other as to who should slash off the biggest piece of flesh from their own limbs. It is very certain that the women must suffer horribly from their bound feet, yet they hobble about with unaffected cheerfulness. In one case that I heard of, the nails of the toes pressed under the contracted sole had forced their way up through the flesh.

The unrestrained cruelty in these heathen lands would make you shudder. Not far from this place there lived two brothers. The elder having no son was permitted by Chinese law to adopt his brother's child as his own. The father of the boy in question caused both the child's legs to be broken, in order to thwart his brother by every means in his power. Not long after the "offended gods," so the people said, "took their revenge." In the sudden collapse of a

wall the father of the injured boy was severely crushed and both his legs cut to pieces.

At Woochang a high green ridge, called the " Serpent Hill," divides the town into two parts. Not so very long ago an enterprising official made a cutting through the top of the hill to accommodate a carriage road. Hardly was it completed when he fell ill with a painful disease of the ear. It was represented to him that the serpent, in indignation at having a hole made in his back for the sake of such a paltry thing as a carriage road, had sent this illness by way of punishment. In alarm the official instantly gave orders that the cutting should be filled in and the carriage road done away with, and, needless to say, he instantly recovered his lost health.

We walked up the grass-grown slope, where there are still traces of the road to be seen. At the foot of the hill a tangled mass of buildings, flaunting brilliant yellow flags, were pointed out to us as barracks, decorated in honour of the Empress's birthday, which is a movable feast, according to the fancy of the fortune-tellers, who have to decide on a lucky day. A few weak-kneed, depressed-looking horses, with protruding ribs—the " cavalry mounts "—were lined up outside the barracks.

Talking of roads, still another enterprising official over here at Hankow had the brilliant idea of flattening down one of the city walls and turning it into a causeway a mile or so long, across low-lying ground between Hankow and the River Han. Fortunately,

the dragon expressed no disapproval, and the road has been allowed to remain. We drove along it one day, enjoying the sights. In a shallow stretch of water men were floundering about, diving down and up again. It seems they were catching fish, and by imitating the antics of the creatures themselves, they succeeded in disarming suspicion and enticed them into their clutches. One popped out of the water just as we were passing with a big fish held between his teeth !

The open stretches of land where the floods had subsided were gay with colour. Long lengths of blue and indigo cloth, just freshly dyed, lay drying on the ground ; red silk was being wound across skeleton clothes-horses on to gigantic wooden reels ; and further on whole fields were spread from end to end with magenta, pink, and yellowy-brown paper, and amongst the paper, coffins new and coffins old, coffins the right side up and coffins half turned over, were scattered about promiscuously, whether waiting for burial or occupation we were too far off to decide.

The road ended in a transformation scene. Native dwellings, swamp lands, coffins, and scenes of primitive industry changed all of a sudden into a " Western " suburb of bricks and mortar, factories and chimneys side by side with the great rolling river of the Han, " too full for sound and foam," and a jumble of boats, junks, sampans, fishing craft, and cargo vessels hugging the shores.

The factories and chimneys announce the influence

of the "outside Kingdom man," but modern machinery by no means always appeals to the Chinese. Someone was telling me the other day of a new invention which was submitted to the head mandarin. It had the supreme advantage of needing the services of one man only, and of doing the work of a hundred. His Excellency, however, considered this a supreme disadvantage. A machine that would give employment to a hundred men instead of one would be more to the point, he said, and he would be prepared to consider any invention of this kind.

Some of the native methods of preparing goods for market are said to be wonderfully efficacious, though absurdly simple. We passed a man this morning who was pressing out new cloth. A roll of the cloth on a gigantic wooden reel, placed on a stone slab, was weighed down by a block of granite shaped like a big "V." On the top of this a man balanced himself by holding on to a beam above his head, and slowly rocked the "V"-shaped block from side to side with his two feet. The result, they said, was excellent.

We have been investing in native wares for our journey up the river. Were there ever a people who could provide so economically and yet so efficiently for their comforts ? Deborah and I have purchased a couple of foot-stoves for about two shillings apiece, brass baskets with perforated lids and large handles, ten or twelve inches in diameter and six or seven inches in depth, which, when carefully filled with wood ash

and some burning knobs of charcoal, will last for hours and keep one splendidly warm. The Chinese hold them sometimes inside their outer garments, warming themselves back and front, and creating, as you may well imagine, a most peculiar effect of deformity. Furthermore, we have fitted ourselves out with "pu k'ai," native quilts wadded with cotton-wool; but, alas! we did not take a native with us to "talk price," and flattered ourselves we could make this simple purchase on our own account.

We selected an attractive "pu k'ai" shop, and chose a couple of nice clean-looking quilts, with glaring covers of cotton cloth, and, having found the price considerably less than we expected, we returned triumphantly with our purchases. Our hostess looked at them suspiciously, and, unpicking a few stitches, pointed out to us that the shopman had had the best of the bargain—the cotton-wool was full of black specks and horrible suggestions. The cover was new, and that was all!

We made a second journey to the shop, with one of the serving women in attendance. I expected a stormy scene, but I was not versed in Oriental methods. The serving woman gently and sweetly made a seemingly polite remark about their sign-board. The magic words took instant effect. The shopman smilingly produced the money we had paid and received his goods back again without a word of remonstrance.

Our next attempt at bargaining was in a china shop.

Our guide, the serving woman once more, said she would take us to one that she could recommend in the three-mile street. She stopped before a strange-looking place, in which quite half the stock-in-trade consisted of ropes and crabs, and the whole staff was sitting round a table with their basins and chop-sticks, eating a late breakfast. So indifferent were they to the presence of customers at this inauspicious moment that they merely stared at us wonderingly and went on with their food. We went round the shelves and helped ourselves, bringing the things to the counter to " talk price." The breakfast party bestirred itself at this juncture, and the discussion became animated. Meanwhile the serving woman sat on a high chair, resting her maimed feet, and smiled, and the smile went round the shop. It occurred to us afterwards that she had taken this opportunity of doing her " tsin tsih " (relatives) a good turn, as we discovered later that all the best china shops were in another part of the town.

Hankow simply hums with industry. The air is full—morning, noon, and eve—of the see-saw chant of the coolies as they trot patiently up and down the roads to and from the river, bearing great burdens of cotton-wool and cloth and tea. Wherever one goes there are coolies carrying burdens, long lines of them, and each one is chanting first a high note, then a low note, in varying keys. Everyone seems busy, and nearly everyone is in a hurry. Even the women, with their stiff " wooden " legs, ending off in knobs and looking

like ninepins in trousers, hobble along at a marvellously quick pace.

The weather is growing colder. The rainy season ended in June sunshine, the June sunshine passed with a rapid swerve to winter cold.

By this time our preparations are almost complete. We have got our bedding, our foot-stoves, our washing basins, our plates and spoons, our candles and lanterns, and the last week in November will find us on the river.

Deborah gets rather depressed, and people marvel at us for proposing a trip up the Yangtse merely for pleasure. It seems that the friends whom we were to have gone with started when the water was too high, and have been badly wrecked. They have lost their boat and spoilt all their things. But wrecks are such common events on the upper Yangtse that nobody seems particularly surprised.

Yours,

V.

Ichang,

November 28th.

Dear Joan,

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday we travelled by steamer from Hankow to Ichang, and now, I am glad to say, we have finished with steamers for some months to come, as they can go no further. Of all the dreary, weary journeys, those four days from Hankow to Ichang were about the worst. The scenery was a study in sepia—a brown, mud-stained river, low, mud-built banks, occasional sodden clumps of mud-and-wattle huts, a drab-coloured pagoda, mournful and solitary, and now and again a water buffalo, bearing on its solid back a muffled figure hunched up beneath an oil-paper umbrella.

The weather was as drab-coloured as the scenery, the steamer smelt of paint, and the food came out of tins. Only five people besides our two selves were travelling "foreign." Below stairs, however, there were masses of Chinese passengers, who apparently do not mind how they travel, and are satisfied with very little more than standing room.

When we first arrived here the cold considerably damped our ardour. The house in which we are staying is planned with a view to coolness in summer rather than warmth in winter. I started my Chinese

foot-stove, but being a novice in these matters, burnt holes in my shoes and large pieces out of my skirt.

We imagined we should be off at once on the house-boat journey, but it seems this sort of thing cannot be done in a hurry—not, at least, in China. The selection of the boat and the bargaining over the price is a long and tedious business. Out on the river the boats lie side by side in their hundreds, but it takes an expert to know which to choose and how much money to offer for it. Then ensues a good deal of bother over the cargo, which has to be passed through the Customs, and Dr. and Mrs. P., who have kindly promised to escort us up the river, are taking a large quantity of stores, etc., from the coast. Finally the boatman must decide on a lucky day on which to start.

Deborah and I, meanwhile, finding everybody busy except ourselves, have plenty of time in which to explore Ichang. Even here, a thousand miles up the Yangtse, there is quite a little colony of foreigners, and at this end of the town the tumble-down native shops are interspersed by trim foreign buildings—Custom House, post office, hospital, etc. When these are passed, however, the scene changes, and one finds oneself in the usual narrow street, five or six feet wide, amongst the now familiar tiny, open-fronted shops.

The dingiest of these are the tea shops (another point of contrast with Western lands). They are made as uninviting as possible, reminding one of a

broken-down shed with the front taken out—black rafters in the darkness overhead, black mud on the uneven floor below. Around the unadorned tables there are forms to sit upon, or high stools, and the only crockery consists of small basins, and the only food of weak tea—with, as you know, neither sugar nor milk. The unsophisticated Chinese loathes milk, and says that the "outside Kingdom man smells of milk and soap," rather a clean smell according to our notions, but to them it is objectionable. The restaurants are like the tea-shops, except that the basins are more in number, and filled with a mixture of rice and chopped-up vegetables, plus a little fish and pork.

In a shop tidier than the rest I asked the price of a couple of exquisite china vases. They were not for sale, they said, and I gathered that this was a medicine store and my exquisite vases contained drugs!

The cotton-wool shops are immensely attractive. Every available space is covered by the great drifts of snowy-white wool, which is sold at about fivepence a pound.

But the residences in the narrow streets are palatial in comparison with the houses on the shore, which the fisher-folk are busy just now putting together. They are fragile structures, built of bamboo poles and bits of matting, and seem curiously inappropriate to the coldest season of the year. During the summer months, when the river is high, the shore is completely submerged. Three weeks ago it was all under water,

and in six months' time the river will rise again, and half the bamboo poles and matting will be carried away by the swift current. Under the circumstances it seems strange that anyone should think it worth while to build at all. With surprising lack of foresight in so practical a people they generally wait just twelve hours too long. The water rises, and they lose what they might otherwise have saved.

Yesterday evening our host, knowing we should like to see as much as possible of all sides of life in China, took us with him to one of the opium dens. The streets, mysterious at the best of times, were distinctly weird at night. The houses, yawning like black caverns, seemed alive with people, of whose presence we were vaguely conscious. The narrow streets were thronged with shadows, dead and alive—dense black shadows, where no light penetrated, and moving shadows of human beings passing from the wan light of a native lamp, a burning wick in a saucer of oil, or a red candle in a paper lantern, into the darkness. Nearly every shop boasted a light of some kind, more or less inadequate. In one or two of them the evening meal was in progress. The street seemed to be public property, and at one point our way was obstructed by a supper-table with a family party gathered round it, out on the pavement.

Even so it was evident that the day's work was not yet over. At one particularly well-lighted corner a street reader had gathered an attentive audience. These men, who expound or read aloud the Chinese

classics, are usually employed by someone who desires thereby to accumulate merit in the next world! In the blacksmiths' forges men were still hard at work. One queried when the day would be over for these busy sons of toil. It was the second watch of the night. The night watchman sounded his gong to that effect as he passed along the street, yet the workers were still working, and the very children were not in bed. A burning incense stick made a pathetic little point of light on the ground in front of most of the shops. It was stuck into the crevices of the wall, and was held competent to keep off evil spirits!

In a patch of shadow we arrived at our opium den—a narrow doorway screened by thick hanging curtains from the eyes of passers-by. We raised the curtains and went in, our host leading the way. The room—long, low, and narrow—was crowded with people reclining at full length on hard couches, wide enough to accommodate two at a time, and between the two a small wooden stand held a couple of lamps with glass bowls the size of a lemon, and several small squares of paper on which reposed tiny lumps of sticky black stuff, something like hot sealing-wax in consistency. One of the smokers rolled a bit of it between his fingers, holding it close to the light of the lamp. He was still smoking his water tobacco pipe, but his opium pipe lay ready to hand.

In many of the big towns, I am told, the opium dens have been closed, but at Ichang nothing has

been done in this way as yet. Owing, however, to the heavier taxes and restrictions of one kind and another, the "foreign medicine," as they call it, has increased considerably in price.

In our particular den the evening's orgy had evidently only just commenced. The men on the divans were still sufficiently alert to take a great interest in our movements, and were a long way off as yet from that horrible state of conscious paralysis when, as De Quincey puts it, "the opium smoker lies under a world's weight of incubus and nightmare . . . he would fain lay down his life if he might rise and walk, but he is powerless as an infant, and cannot so much as make an effort to move."

Our host had brought some papers on the "outside Kingdom doctrine."

"Can you recognise character?" he asked. (In other words, "Can you read?")

"Renteh, renteh!" they answered ("Can recognise"), and eagerly stretched forth hands to receive any that were offered.

The people of Ichang seem quite kindly disposed towards the foreigners in these days. Only a very few years ago, however, in the great drought of 1900, things were different. The townsfolk resorted to every device that commended itself to their superstitious minds in order to persuade the gods to give them rain. The idols, however, refused to be propitiated. Tears, prayers, sacrifices, were alike unavailing. At last it was suggested that the

entire population should be *made to laugh*, so that the gods, seeing their indifference to trouble, should be won over!

In order, therefore, to bring about this state of general hilarity a dog was dressed up as an old man and carried through the streets to arouse laughter. It is hardly to be wondered at, perhaps, that the gods remained obdurate. By this time riots were commencing. Blame fell, as usual, on the foreigners, and two Roman Catholic priests were killed. The Catholic bishop demanded compensation, but the compensation was not forthcoming; thereupon he gave orders that the bodies of the murdered men should not be buried, but installed in the "Temple of the City God," until proper reparation had been made. The people rose up indignantly at the insult to the "God of the City," and bore the bodies away. The god, in gratitude to his supporters, so the story goes, granted their prayers for rain!

To-morrow I hear we are to start up the river. This afternoon our two last preparations were made; we invested in velvet boots and silver shoes. This sounds like an episode out of Cinderella. The velvet boots, of course, are to wear. They are wadded and beautifully warm, but turn up at the toes like the curved roofs of the houses, and are horribly uncomfortable. The "shoes" are heavy blocks of rough silver, worth about seven pounds ten shillings apiece; and one of them was promptly carried over to the nearest blacksmith's forge to be heated

in the fire and broken up into small pieces for ready use !

We bought the velvet boots in a native boot shop not far from the Yamen (the residence of the head mandarin), and the memory of that Yamen haunts me still. Round the entrance gates stood numbers of wooden cages, from which the prisoners had just been removed and put away into the inner prison for the night. The punishment of being shut up in one of those cages is not considered of much account, but occasionally the cage is the scene of a horrible death. The condemned man is suspended just twelve inches off the ground inside the bars and left to die. Round the outer courtyard roofed-in cattle pens lurked in the shadows. Pleading faces pressed against the slats of wood looked out at us, and hands seeking alms were thrust forth imploringly through tiny apertures. These were the prisoners herded there for the night.

" What kind of crime are they imprisoned for ? " we asked.

" Very probably," our companion answered, " nine out of every ten are absolutely innocent."

And he told us that a Chinese friend of his own is at the present time undergoing a life sentence for no cause whatever except this, that he had become unpopular in his native place by opening a chapel for the propagation of the " Doctrine," and his neighbours had trumped up a case in which they accused him of obstructing the collection of

taxes. There was not a shade of evidence against him. On the very day when he was accused of committing the offence he was away in the country with the foreign teacher doing evangelistic work. The official made a feint of granting him his freedom; the same day, however, he was re-arrested by the official underlings and taken back to a prison, where he has remained ever since, and *will* remain until released by death—and death does not tarry long in these Chinese prisons.

The power exercised by the official underlings seems unbounded. Woe betide the man against whom they bear a grudge. Horrible methods of torture are resorted to in order to extort bribes, and these so-called " secret " punishments are dreaded by the Chinese far more than the official ones, which are often humane in comparison. Not always, though ! They are past-masters in the art of maiming without killing. I have heard of quicksilver being poured down the ears, in order to irrevocably injure the brain without causing death ; and, in the case of theft, the sinews of the legs are sometimes cut, in order to incapacitate the unfortunate victim for the rest of his life.

But to leave these gruesome subjects and introduce you to our house-boat.

The centre of it is roofed in and partitioned off into four cabin-like rooms. There will be about forty people on board, six of us, thirty or so of the crew, and the captain's mother, child, and wife

(I put the wife last, in the place she probably occupies in the captain's mind). If we were to apportion the deck space evenly between the lot of us, I suppose the sum would work out into seven feet per head—say about enough space to be buried in; but the sum is not a case of simple division, the lion's share of the boat, i.e. the roofed-in part, belongs exclusively to the six foreigners. The fore-deck (except the prohibited place at the far extremity of the bows, which is occupied by an invisible god!) is for the crew. I shall be curious to see how they manage to lie down at night. They will have to fit themselves in like bits of a Chinese puzzle. The after-deck, of which a small corner is covered in, is the residence of the captain's family, the foreigners' cook, and a few privileged members of the crew.

But what one lacks in space is made up for by decoration. The windows (sliding glass panels, which slide very badly) are gorgeously painted with unrecognisable landscapes, birds, flowers, and fishes in vivid shades of scarlet and purple and apple-green. Gaudy paper panels adorn the inner wall of the dining-cabin, the ceiling is of brilliant red, the beams of green and blue, the frieze (?) of scarlet, embossed in gold.

Deborah and I have a bedroom measuring just six feet across. The bedsteads, made of boards on trestles, are at right angles to each other, there are three feet to spare in front of a tiny square table which holds our washing basin, and when Deborah

stands up I suppose I shall have to lie down, and vice versa, but even so we shall be luxuriously lodged in comparison to the poor crew on the fore-deck. I am not sure how many there are of them yet, and we must be truly Chinese and not venture to count numbers, as this is held to be unlucky, and will mean the loss of one or more before the end of the journey.

We leave to-morrow, so I will post this before I go. It is the last time for many days to come that we shall have a chance of sending anything by steamer.

Yours,

V.

On the Upper Yangtse,

December 3rd.

Dear Joan,

We are off at last! It reminds me at present of a pirate scene in a pantomime; the pirates are the crew and we are the prisoners. A rough-looking lot of men they are, too, some only half clad, others simply smothered in garments, their heads swathed in cloths, black or otherwise. The deck is stained with blood—the blood of the cock sacrificed to the river god to ensure his protection on the journey, and crackers in his honour are going off like a volley of guns in our ears. We have been bundled on board with our goods and chattels, and have hardly standing room until things have been unpacked a bit and made shipshape. The boat's cook, meanwhile, is preparing a feast for the "pirates" with which to celebrate the occasion. The ship's kitchen is merely a square hole in the middle of the fore-deck; the hole contains both the cook and the fire plus the culinary utensils. Only the cook's head and shoulders are visible. He is leaning over stirring the contents of a huge cauldron and adding ingredients. Two or three joints of meat, a fowl all complete, even to the head and neck, are simmering gaily as the cook flings in a *bucketful* of sliced vegetables, which he pats down with a caressing

hand, and then adds a bundle of something that looks like the wicks of a lamp (probably some species of native macaroni).

The crew consists chiefly of "trackers," and a tracker's life, I am told, is one of the hardest of lives, even here in this country of hard work and plain living. They belong to an army which counts its members by the thousand, and toil from daybreak till dark, and often longer, with only short intervals for food, at the rate of twopence three farthings a day, and their work is arduous. Either they are pushing and pulling at the fin-like oars or long paddles, by which the boat is propelled, or they are clambering over the rocks on the shore, climbing precipices, and racing down slopes, hauling the boat along all the time by means of great bamboo ropes. Woe betide one who takes it easier than the rest! The overseer, whip in hand, is down on the slacker with blows fast and furious, and when the day comes that their strength fails them (and with one at least of our crew that time looks as though it were not far off), nothing remains for them to do but to fall out of the ranks and lie down on the shore to die.

This evening we moored early—our own boat and its attendant satellites—the small "wu pan," for carrying the trackers to and fro, and the official red boat, with its picturesque crew of river marines in scarlet silk jackets slashed with black velvet. This is the life-saving boat, granted as a favour by the life-boat service, and when, amidst much yelling and

shouting the trackers came on board, bamboo poles were brought forth, and over them an awning of matting spread by way of a roof. The feast over, they laid themselves down, the head of one against the feet of the other, and wrapped in quilts and quilted garments, they covered the deck space from side to side and corner to corner like a padded carpet.

Second day on board.

This morning we stepped forth to find ourselves in a changed world. The great river, which used to be a mile wide, has dwindled down to about a hundred and fifty yards, and is shrinking and cowering between giant precipices of rock; blue, shadowy spectres of hills close in one behind the other, hiding alike that which is to be and that which has been. We realise that we are passing through the first of the famous gorges. Ping-Shan-Pa with its orange groves has been left behind, and the river, dark and gloomy and of depth unknown, flows deep down at the foot of the precipices, whilst our trackers—one long, tortuous line of yelling, howling creatures—clamber over unseen paths across apparently unclimbable rocks, dragging at the bamboo rope which, fastened to the mast of our boat, is sometimes nearly a quarter of a mile in length. Occasionally the shouting increases. The excitement amongst those of the crew left on board grows intense—the rope has caught round a jutting-

IN THE YANGTSE GORGES

out rock. He who hesitates is lost! In a flash a tracker, stripped to the skin, plunges into the water from goodness knows where, climbs up some impossible place, and sets the rope free. A few moments more and we might have landed on the rocks. As it is, on more than one occasion we drift perilously near the formidable cliffs.

Third day on board.

We are entering into dreamland—gliding with sails set and the trackers towing on the shore, out of a sea of white fog into a land of sunshine veiled in summer haze—a land of solitary dwelling-places with low walls and curved roofs, of feathery bamboo groves shadowed by pines, of shores where the rocks have been hurled back pell-mell by the river in its wrath, and wooded hills crowned by solitary pagodas. There is no one about, only on the rarest occasions a lonely fisherman in his cotton cloth of cornflower-blue, standing patiently on an isolated rock wielding his fishing-net.

Fourth day on board.

Our wonder-world grows in splendour. This morning, in the radiant sunshine, we find ourselves making rapid progress up the glittering, diamond-spangled river, the waters of which rush past us in mad haste to leave behind the land of enchantment.

But on ahead our way seems barred; the river appears to come to an end altogether at the foot of the precipices. Walls of rock, black in the shadow, rise a thousand feet or more above the water, and on the broken heights the crimson foliage of some low-growing shrub casts gory splashes of colour across the sunlit green. But the river forces a way through where no way seems possible, and suddenly the rocks open out as though by magic. Again though and yet again the mountains beyond—veiled sentinels robed in pale amethyst, violet, and dusky purple—marshal their forces together, and the frowning precipices gather round to bar the way. And so it goes on, broken ever and anon by cliffs that have crumbled into sand and rocky boulders, and the boulders—some of them—have rolled down into the river, obstructing the flow of the water and helping to form the boiling, seething torrents—the white foam and the black whirlpools of the justly dreaded rapids. The old adage, "Familiarity breeds contempt," does not hold good on the upper Yangtse. I am told that it has exactly the opposite results with the native boatmen.

The whirlpools are most dangerous when the water is high—say in the summer months; but even now they fill one with a certain amount of awe when the swirling water gimlets down in the centre to a depth of four or five feet, and with weird suddenness closes up again, as though no harm were meant!

This morning we passed up the famous Tong

TONG LIN RAPID

The rock in the centre of the water was that upon which the German steamer "Shui Hsiang" was wrecked.

Lin rapid—a boiling cauldron above a great black rock in the centre of the stream, whereby there hangs a story. I was reading an account of the Yangtse the other day and came across these words :—

"In 1899 foreign enterprise placed upon the river small steamers . . . which will probably revolutionise the traffic in a few years. . . ."

As far as I know, the first and only passenger steamer on the waters of the upper Yangtse came to grief against this very rock at the foot of the Tong Lin rapid on its trial voyage. The native pilot, knowing the eccentricities of the river, advised the captain, a German, to steer straight for the middle of the rock; the captain thought he knew better, and steered for the clear water at the side. The swift current flung the steamer full tilt against the wall of rock. Hopelessly damaged, it was hurled stern foremost down the rushing stream, and a hundred yards or so below the rapid sank to the bottom of the river, and there it still lies, without causing so much as a ripple on the surface of the water, to mark the spot.

They give us a good deal of excitement, these rapids. As a rule we go on shore and clamber over rocky boulders to a bit of higher ground, where a tottering row of dishevelled hovels constitute the homesteads of a tattered company of men and women and small boys, who earn a livelihood by helping to tow; and as, according to one authority, ten thousand boats pass up the river in the course of the year,

and the big cargo junks need three hundred men or so to haul them through the rough water, and may take hours, possibly a whole day, on the way, one realises that there is plenty of employment of a kind for the inhabitants of these miserable-looking hovels.

The crowds who gather round us are immensely interested in two things—my gloves and my camera. They press their eyes to the view-finder, and cannot understand why they fail to see anything.

"Look not see!" they say in disappointed tones, and when, after some trouble, I succeed in taking a snap-shot, they gather round to get a glimpse of the result, and are distressed to find that nothing is visible. The distant beating of a drum announces the oncoming of our boat. The weird, mysterious thud, thud, thud of a drum in the distance will always carry me back to the Yangtse rapids. At critical moments it is sounded incessantly, and by it signals and directions are given to the trackers. The drum is answered by a wild yelling as a long, bending, tortuous line of men and boys comes round the rocks, just below us, pulling for dear life—each one almost bent double in his effort to advance—each one chanting "Tseo! tseo! tseo!" so fervently that the chant becomes a groan, as he holds on with every muscle strained to the knotted sling attached to the bamboo rope above his head, and clings with bare feet to slippery ledges of rock, on which an ordinary pedestrian would find but a scanty foot-

hold. Meanwhile it is touch and go! Our boat is battling with the turbid water of the rapid and does not move a foot. For a few breathless moments it seems to be slipping backwards. It is like an exciting tug-of-war—the boat struggling at one end of the rope, the men at the other. Tattered trackers from the hovels are enrolled as recruits, and the men win the day. There is always a danger of the rope breaking. It is a common saying that a Chinese values a few cents more than a life. His first idea in a wreck is to save his quilt, and in the case of these bamboo ropes he is so loth to throw them away until they are absolutely broken, that he will often go on using them when they are worn and frayed and quite unsafe. When the rope breaks, the boat swings back down the rushing stream, and very likely loses in a few minutes the ground that has taken the best part of a day to cover.

After safely getting up the Tong Lin rapid, we passed through the Niu Kan gorge. The wind was in our favour, and with sails set, we sped at an unusually rapid pace along the sun-flecked water in the deep cleft between gigantic cliffs. The river was dotted with sails of other junks. They tracked from side to side, and raced along two or three abreast of each other. The trackers, who were all on board, whistled for the wind. As a matter of fact, they didn't "whistle," but called, and their voices took a high falsetto note, which re-echoed from the cliffs. The official red boat, crimson in the sunlight, and adorned

with spreading sails of vivid blue, darted in and out from side to side of the river like a monster dragon-fly. At times the junks came so close together that a collision seemed inevitable. Finally, with a crash, the windows on one side of our "saloon cabin" smashed to smithereens; but that was a small matter in comparison to another collision that same day. I was standing at the cabin door looking on to the fore-deck. With a wild yell the captain sprang to his feet, and dashing over to the handful of men who were working the sweep, added his exertions to theirs. Too late! With a resounding smash as of all the windows and all the crockery in the boat falling to the ground, we came quivering to a standstill. Those in front rushed to the back of the boat to see what had happened, those at the back tried to press forward and found their passage barred. The boat was literally impaled on a projecting tooth of rock, which had made short work of the wall and the windows of the passage-way at the side of our cabin, and was sticking its fangs right through into the cabin itself, upsetting the washstand and sending the crockery flying.

It was a critical moment, but only a moment. In an incredibly short space of time we were free again, pushed off by dexterously applied boat poles, and the thudding of the drum announced to the trackers out on the towing-path that all was right once more. The window-frames and the woodwork floated gaily away on the brown water. The "lao-

pan" (captain) came and looked with a smile at the damage done, his wife swept up the debris, and one of the crew took down a cabin door and nailed it over the yawning gap. Had the rock struck below the water-line, the boat must inevitably have gone to the bottom. It was a narrow escape!

We had hardly settled down again when the sound of wildly rushing waters warned us of the approach of the famous Chin rapid. Our cook, who cooked on placidly through rough water and smooth, through collisions and disasters, had just boiled the kettle and set the table for tea. It went against the grain to go on shore and leave the tea untasted. Our chief was firm, however, and said the Chin Tan was one of the most dangerous of all the rapids, and no one who could help it must stay on board. We clambered along a narrow path, half sand, half rock, beneath a steep, wooded hillside, to which houses were clinging, but with so slight a grasp as to seem in momentary danger of toppling over. Their picturesque brown roofs and low walls, with shuttered openings for windows, reminded me of Swiss châlets; but the pagoda roof of a temple perched high above the dark pines and feathery green bamboos gave the requisite Chinese touch to the picture. Here and there a clump of brilliant crimson foliage or an orange or pumelo tree, laden with golden fruit, showed that the autumn had come; but the day was as warm and sunny as a June day in England. A couple of our marines, in their picturesque scarlet silk coats,

formed themselves into our escort. We walked on and on, but the Chin Tan seemed never-ending. It was divided into three sections, and the last apparently was by far the most turbulent of the lot. We arrived at a point from whence we could watch our boat. On ahead of us, somewhere on the towing-path, a hundred trackers or more were pulling for all they were worth on to the great bamboo ropes; but the boat, buffeted on every side by the tumbling waters, seemed too petrified to move, and suddenly the wild yelling of the trackers ceased—the silence in its abruptness betokened calamity of some kind, and in another moment we perceived that the rope had given way. The boat reeled helplessly back at the mercy of the torrent, and the men, fleeing in pursuit, clambered over the rocks and were lost to sight.

We were left alone.

It was growing dusk; the waters of the Chin Tan splashed and roared impatiently, waiting for fresh prey. Our boat had been hurled down stream, nobody knew how far. Even our marines had disappeared. An inquisitive crowd gathered round the strange barbarians, and one old crone expressed a desire to try on Deborah's motor-cap. We appeased her by handing over a glove for her to examine. It was almost dark; we were just contemplating a night on shore, when news came that the boat had been hauled up the rapid again, this time on the further side of the river, where it had moored

CHIN RAPID

for the night. The official red boat had reappeared on the scene, and in it we were rowed swiftly across the smooth water above the rapid to the opposite shores. Then, by the light of flaming torches made of old bamboo rope, we scrambled over slippery rocks, and slithered down a stony bank, till we finally landed on a friendly plank put out to help us back to our deserted saloon cabin, with its table still set ready for afternoon tea.

The seventh day of our voyage we passed the " Yeh Tan," and, in spite of the fact that all went smoothly, it took us the best part of the day. There were many boats bound in the same direction, and we had to wait our turn.

We whiled away the long hours in the hot sunshine bargaining for Mandarin oranges, grown on the spot and sold for something like twenty a penny, brown cakes that tasted of oil, and rice toffee, which is said to be most nutritious.

Deborah brought out her paint-box, and was instantly accosted by a decrepit man, who proceeded to disengage from its wrappings a leg covered with open sores, and offered it for her inspection. He had naturally concluded that the paint-box was a medicine chest, and every foreigner in the eyes of the unsophisticated Chinese is a physician.

On our ninth day we entered the Wu Shan gorge, with a strong head wind obstructing our progress. This is the longest of all the gorges, over twenty miles in length, and one prolonged series of sharp

corners and dangerous places. On the rapids themselves so many precautions are taken that the dangers are somewhat minimised; but at rocky points like those in the Wu Shan gorge, owing to the many cross-currents and the rush of the water, which tears along at something like eleven miles an hour, and a strong wind blowing into the bargain, collisions are only avoided by the exercise of great skill and promptitude. The boat hugs the shore, in order to keep as much as possible out of the wind. One false move turning these sudden corners might mean destruction.

Often and often every spare hand—the "mother-in-law," the cook, even the passengers, throw aside any occupation they are engaged in, and seize on brooms, mops, sticks, or a boat pole, if there is one to be had, and rush to the rescue, pushing with all might and main against an overhanging wall of rock between which and the moving boat lie but a few inches of open space. The "mother-in-law's" strident tones sound shrilly above the chanting of the boatmen and the splashing of the waters. We call her the "bird of evil omen." At the first sign of danger, or in any quarrel, her voice is always to be heard. At other times she retires into private life in the roofed-in cabin at the stern. The "lao-pan" grows wild with unrestrained excitement at these critical moments. I have seen him bound in the air over and over again, like a child skipping, to emphasise the directions which he is bawling out

to the boatmen on deck and the trackers on the shore.

His excitement, perhaps, is hardly to be wondered at, when one reflects that his only means of livelihood is bound up with the safety of the boat. Most of these men live from hand to mouth. Unless they have exceptionally good fortune, the intervals waiting at Ichang for fresh cargo or passengers generally land them deeply into debt, so that most of the passage money paid in advance goes to the creditors before starting. If they cover expenses on the voyage up they are satisfied; but on the return journey they hope for a profit. From June till October the water is too high to be safe for navigation; the working year is, therefore, never a long one.

Our eleventh day on board we nearly came to grief. All seemed going well. We were being hauled up a small rapid, and by the lazy, indifferent manner of the boatmen and the sleepy way in which the captain was thud, thudding at the drum, there was evidently no cause for alarm. The water boiling up around us had no power to stay our progress. In another moment we should be through, but in another moment the aspect of affairs had changed. The bubbling waves leapt triumphantly against the sides of the boat. The men seized violently upon the sweep, and their chanting changed to yells. The "lao-pan" deserted his post at the drum, and snatching a handful of cooked rice from a basin near by, flung it into the water. He hoped thereby

to appease the dragon; but the dragon refused to be won over so easily. The rope had neither slipped nor broken, but had got entangled in the sweep, and we were swirling round wildly, helplessly, in the raging torrent. Again and still again the captain stopped to throw out more rice, but the boat had turned broadside on and was drifting swiftly and surely down the stream. All hands available worked at the oars, but without any apparent effect.

We were losing the well-fought ground of that morning, and going down in a few minutes the stream that had taken us many hours to come up. The Hsia Ma rapid of yesterday haunted our memories. If we got as far as that, there was no telling how much further we might drift, or whether the end would be a smashed-up wreck amongst the rocks. But suddenly, as though by chance, we slipped into a patch of quiet water—where gentle ripples lapped the scattered boulders on the sand. There was no time to be lost. In another minute it would be too late. We were rapidly floating past our haven of refuge, when one of the boatmen leapt with marvellous agility—it was a wonderful athletic feat—from the deck of the moving junk to the top of a projecting rock. He had a rope with him, which with quick dexterity he wound around and around a jutting-out boulder, and the situation was saved, but much time had been lost. We had to wait patiently until our trackers came back to tow us up the river again; and this

time the dragon, sleepy after his feast of rice, left us to ascend the rapid in peace.

The next day we made the passage of the famous "Wind-Box" or "Bellows" gorge, only four miles long, but one of the grandest of all the gorges. The great river shrinks down to something over one hundred and twenty yards in width, and cuts itself a way between precipitous cliffs, many of them two thousand feet in height. The tiny path used by the trackers is of curious construction. Seen from the river, it looks like a smooth groove worn away along the face of the wall of rock about a third of the way up. The lower edge of the groove forms the path, the upper edge an overhanging roof. The "Wind-Box" gorge is said to take its name from the curious square holes high up in a cliff near the end of the gorge, there being a certain similarity between them and the bellows or "wind-box" (as the Chinese call it), which is still to be found in every blacksmith's forge, and which, though primitive in make, is extremely efficacious. Some say, however, that these same square holes have been made the receptacles of coffins, though why and how they were placed in this seemingly inaccessible spot remains a mystery. At the mouth of the gorge a great mass of rock called the "Goosetail" rock blocks up the middle of the stream, dividing it into two narrow channels. It stands forty feet or more above the water; when, however, the river is high, it is completely submerged, and the danger is so great that no junks are allowed to pass.

That evening we arrived at the city of Kuei Fu. The sun was low in the western skies as we glided slowly along the peaceful waters and squeezed our boat in amongst the other boats which were moored two and even three deep in a brown, tattered fringe of craft along the shore. We looked up and saw the town rising above us, built on a tongue of land which jutted out below the blue-grey hills. The soft brown and dusky whites of the walls and the roofs and the contrasting poppy-red of a Confucian temple were framed in by the mauve and amethyst haze of distant mountains.

A very few years back Kuei Fu was not considered safe for "outside Kingdom" travellers, and even the missionaries failed in obtaining a lodgment inside the city gates until 1903, when the China Inland Mission opened a station there, and by now, only four years later, things have so changed that the C.I.M. representative, on being asked if we could not see anything of the town, made answer that we could go wherever we pleased. We were to spend the Sunday at Kuei Fu, so we had a whole day before us.

A long flight of stone steps steered picturesquely up through the shadowy archways of the city gates.

The narrow street beyond climbed the hill as steadily as the steps. It seemed literally oozing with pedestrians, with loiterers, and with beggars—and all the shops appeared to be food shops of one kind or another—fruit shops where oranges *ready peeled* were offered for sale (the peel, by the way, is sold to

the druggists), vegetable shops, grain shops, tea shops, restaurants, and, saddest of sad sights, in the hollows under the brick stoves, where food was being cooked, beggars had thrust in as much of themselves as there was room for, seeking warmth. They looked mere bundles of rags. Sometimes a face was visible, swollen with leprosy, or a head covered with sores; sometimes the bundles lay motionless, with strange rigidity. One shuddered to think that possibly all that now remained was a corpse!

At the end of the street another flight of steps led up to the high grey walls and gracefully curved roofs of the palace, the gardens of which are renowned for their beauty. Our friends kindly offered to take us to call on the owners. There are two palaces, an old and a new, belonging to the same family, and over them hangs the shadow of past tragedy. In the reign of terror of 1900 the head of the house, a high official in the province of Cheh Kiang, was accused of having brought about the massacre of four missionaries and a little child and sentenced to death. He swallowed "gold," * as the saying goes, and died by his own hand. The widowed Tai Tai retired into the old palace, as it is called, and the

* I am told that this "gold" is the poisonous blood of some bird called "jin," the same sound though not the same character as gold, and that all officials carry it about with them in tiny pockets at the end of the bands at the back of official coats, which bands are called respectively "filial" and "loyal," representing the idea that one is always ready to take one's own life should one's emperor or one's father so command.

"new palace," with its famous gardens, was given to a relative of her dead husband. Strangely enough, the Tai Tai and her family, instead of feeling any antagonism towards foreigners, are unusually kindly disposed towards them. They evidently belong to that somewhat small section of better-class Chinese who approve not only of Western learning, but of Westerners themselves.

We naturally expected a good deal of grandeur in this palatial home; but here, as elsewhere, we were confronted by the same strange mixture of grandeur and squalor.

At the great gates a half-bred dog stood on the defensive. A call brought the gate-keeper on the scene—a shabby, dishevelled-looking individual, who signed to us to advance. An untidily dressed girl in faded blue cotton trousers and tunic, probably a slave-girl, shot round a corner and escorted us by a series of right-angles through various paved court-yards to the guest-hall, a palatial room, with the usual long double line of square chairs, alternating with square tea-tables, ending in the seats of honour at either extremity of a larger table raised on a kind of daïs, under a wall decorated stiffly with scrolls. Remembering Chinese etiquette, we were careful to sit on the seats near the door while waiting for the Tai Tai to enter. To be strictly within the bounds of Chinese etiquette, merely the ladies of the party should have come to call on the Tai Tai, whereas we had arrived "en masse," and this, of course, made

it possible for our hostess's brother-in-law to appear on the scene. He flashed across the sombre guest-hall in a magnificent pale violet brocade coat, lined with white fur, and was followed a moment or two later by the Tai Tai, who hobbled in on feet about three inches long, shod in pale blue silk shoes, a meek little woman, with pallid face and projecting, dark eyes, her tunic and trousers of dusky purple, and round her head a closely fitting piece of black crêpe studded with jewels and green jade.

Behind her came a large, heavily made girl, about fifteen or so, with unbound feet arrayed in clumsy velvet boots. Her fat, dull face was thickly powdered and heavily rouged; the rouge was not put on in imitation of nature, but rather the reverse, on the eyelids, for instance, and the chin, and in the centre of the lips a brilliant scarlet dab, round like a cherry, gave the strangest expression to the mouth. She divided her attention between sucking a sweetmeat and gazing at the foreigners. In her spare hand she held an orange wrapped in a dingy pocket-handkerchief; but a handkerchief in any shape or form is a proud possession—in China.

Everybody was introduced, but conversation hung fire. I endeavoured to awaken some interest in the mind of the daughter of the house, though my halting questions in broken Chinese failed, as far as I could tell, to make much impression. I discovered later on, however, that I had inspired a distinct feeling of affection, the first visible sign of which

was the presentation of the orange in the handkerchief. It was a relief to move on into the gardens. Our host led the way, and finding his fur-lined brocade a little warm, divested himself thereof, displaying an inner coat of flowered silk, with an apple-green girdle, and a massive gold watch-chain of Western manufacture. In his freedom of manner and disregard of ceremony he would have shocked a Celestial of the old school. Chinese formality was evidently on the wane in this Kuei Fu palace, and Western manners had not been adopted in its place. The lack of both the one and the other brought about some rather ludicrous situations.

The Tai Tai with her maimed feet kept in the background—walking was evidently a great difficulty to her. A little slave-girl followed close behind, who every now and then held out a water tobacco pipe, from which her mistress took a whiff, but so rapidly that the interruption was hardly noticeable. The daughter of the house put her arm in mine and stroked my hand, and in this affectionate attitude she remained through most of the afternoon. Our host flashed restlessly about like a fidgety dragonfly. He possessed a few words of English and kept urging the loiterers to " come by him."

We dived round dark corners and along paved passages, and took a short cut to the new palace by the back regions of the old. A strange air of neglect and sadness hung over the precincts. Now and again a solitary figure (probably that of a servant) lurked

in a shadowy corner, and watched us furtively. Suddenly we dipped into an old Norman hall, or the Chinese equivalent. It was dark and disused, and from the presence of cooking stoves and culinary utensils, suggested the palace kitchen. A subway led from these deserted regions up a steep incline out into a courtyard surrounded by neglected buildings, the entire centre of which was one huge pond covered with lotus plants. One more narrow passageway brought us to the garden, a garden as unlike our home gardens as the palace was unlike our home palaces. Its chief beauty lay in its glorious situation —terrace above terrace, on the steep hillside, looking down through a veil of trees, across the great river to the shadowy blue mountains, while the roof-tops of the beggar-haunted town were below us in the depths, and blotted out.

As to flower-beds and velvet lawns, they were practically non-existent. Moss-grown paths and untidy shrubberies led by zigzags up to the highest terraces and lost themselves amongst the trees— and the trees were, some of them, very beautiful. A red monthly rose was still in flower, and doubtless in early spring or summer, roses, clematis, honeysuckles, and azaleas would make a goodly show of blossom amongst the palms and the evergreens.

Our new friends seemed loth to say good-bye. The Tai Tai, moreover, was anxious to seize this opportunity of consulting a Western physician. Since her husband's death she had contracted the opium

habit, and was anxious and willing to give it up. Thus it came about that the whole party—the Tai Tai, the gentleman of the violet brocade, and the girl—expressed a wish to visit us that evening on our house-boat; and the latter, clinging to me with a caressing hand, accompanied us on foot, whilst the Tai Tai followed a little later in a sedan-chair.

You will remember the limited space we had to offer; there were not even chairs enough to go round. The Tai Tai and the girl sat in a state of mute passivity, looking on. Whether they were interested did not appear until the happy thought suggested itself to show them our cabin. Whereupon their eyes lit up with pleasure. Side by side they sat upon my bed, keenly scrutinising our "barbaric" tooth-brushes, soap-dishes, hand-mirrors, and so forth.

In the midst of proceedings great hampers of oranges and native cakes were brought in by the palace servants, by way of an offering, which Mrs. P——, in correct Chinese style, accepted by refusing. She "could not venture," "did not dare," to take them, etc., etc. All we could think of on the spur of the moment to give back in return was a packet of butter-scotch, which was, however, much approved of. Our supper-time came and went, the evening drew on, the gentleman of the violet brocade glanced at his watch and said, "it was still early in the extreme." The primary cause of the visit—the medical consultation—in accordance with true Chinese etiquette, was postponed till the very end, and then

merely alluded to as a thing of absolutely no importance. Under the circumstances, it would probably have been highly incorrect to take any notice of the patient herself. The advice given was entrusted to her brother-in-law. The Tai Tai sat by humbly like a child who should be seen and not heard. She looked ill, and was said to be taking an ounce of opium a day, and her poor discoloured teeth were loose in their sockets.

As our guests finally took their departure, they gave me a pressing invitation to go and stay with them in their country house, on my way down the river in the spring. Personally I wished I could, but the idea was not encouraged.

The next morning we started in the cold grey dawn; an east wind penetrated through the thin wooden partition and shivered round our beds. Huddled under our wadded quilts we sang the song of the sluggard, "They have roused me too early, I'll slumber again," when the boat, fighting through some rough water, heaved over heavily and with a crash came trembling to a standstill.

"Get up as quickly as ever you can," came the order; "we are on the rocks!"

We tumbled into the first clothes we could find and stood ready for developments. The "mother-in law's" strident tones sounded shrilly above all else; but the imperturbable cook went on steadily sweeping the floor of the saloon cabin. The "lao-pan" was shouting himself hoarse, while a crowd of boatmen

stood forcing a heavy wooden post under the boat, to raise it from the rocks on which it was impaled. Luckily we were close to the shore, but the water was swirling past us, a mass of bubbling foam. A sudden subsidence of voices gave the signal that we were free again, but the water had flooded the bows, drenching the trackers' bedding and some of the cargo and making havoc of the "kitchen." There was evidently a large hole, but nobody seemed a bit concerned. The captain's wife brought some white wax and cotton wool and a piece of leather, the pilot sawed off a bit of wood from a plank, and all damage was soon repaired! Occasionally boiled rice is resorted to for stopping up holes, and with marked success!

On the 18th December we came through the new rapid, one of the most dangerous at low water, and formed only twelve years ago by the subsidence of the hillside. At first it was absolutely impassable. Then the assistance of foreign engineers was called in. Their blasting operations made navigation possible, but the rapid is still looked upon with dread, and sometimes as many as seven ropes are put out from one solitary boat and many extra trackers engaged. The approach in itself was exciting. A corner in a rough swirling current must be safely rounded and a dash made for the shore, but so neatly as to stop short of the rocks. Our boat achieved the feat successfully, but the big cargo junk behind, neglecting to take in its sweep in time, snapped it

in two on the rocks. An old peasant woman busy at her washing hardly more than a foot away did not even look up, but went on steadily with her work, whilst the onlookers stood petrified, thinking she must inevitably be done to death by the advancing boat. So much for Chinese imperturbability!

As we got further west the vegetation altered somewhat. Bright green patches on the hillside announced sugar-cane plantations, and bamboos—green and golden, plumed and feathered—were of more luxuriant growth than ever. High up on the tops of the hills we were shown the "gai-tsï," walled enclosures used in the old days of internal warfare as cities of refuge—now half overgrown and wholly neglected.

On the 20th we reached Wanhsien, "The Myriad City," and as the most dangerous part of the river journey had been accomplished, our official life-boat took its departure. After that the Hsien magistrate sent us Yamen soldiers. We changed them at every fresh prefecture. They lived on board, and spent their time squatting on the deck, often half asleep.

When I think of Wanhsien I see myself being carried in a sedan-chair up interminable flights of slimy stone steps, through a fog-bound city, past miserable riverside hovels, clinging to sand and rock and banks of crumbling earth, along narrow streets, where all was damp, and dank, and dark, and dreary. A creek from the great river slices the town in half,

and over it a beautiful bridge, one lofty stone arch crowned by a long, low building and climbed by two flights of stone steps, forms one of the most picturesque features of Wanhsien. Our chair-bearers avoided the bridge and crossed the creek lower down. It was comparatively dry, but at certain seasons in the year is a rushing torrent. As we, or rather our chair-bearers, climbed steadily up through the piled-up streets of the city, we literally shivered with cold, and the wet fog wrapped us round.

Then suddenly came a transformation scene. The first rays of the sun had penetrated the fog and shone on the gold characters inscribed on the doorpost of the great gates open to receive us. The chair-bearers set down the chairs in a large and well-kept courtyard, beautifully paved and surrounded by picturesque verandahed buildings with upper stories, latticed fretwork and balconies, and throughout that air of order and cleanliness so often lacking in this land of the Celestials. But the biggest surprise was yet to come. A flight of broad steps led us to a spacious foreign house built on a higher level, and from the cold grasp of the fog we entered a cosy "English" drawing-room, scented by white and yellow jonquils, and warmed our icy hands at a blazing "English" fire. You will have guessed, of course, that we had found our way into the hospitable home of the China Inland Missionaries. They made us warmly welcome, and later on, when the sunshine had melted down the fog, we were shown

round the Mission compound, the church and dispensary, the opium refuge, the guest-hall, and so forth. In every detail all was spruce and well kept. This in itself must be a good object-lesson to the Chinese, who, with their characteristic disregard of comfort, and seeing no pecuniary advantage to be gained by a clean and well-ordered house, adopt a "laisser aller" policy in these matters, but are ready enough to appreciate order and cleanliness when it is brought before them. The "Myriad City" is beautifully situated, piled up terrace upon terrace on the banks of the great river, and watched over by the mountains—richly wooded mountains, hillsides embowered in green—oranges, pomegranates, bamboos, and cypress trees (the cypress wood, they say, is much in request for building the junks, as it is both strong and pliable). In the spring and early summer the floral display must be exquisite. Even when we were there in December, we gathered ourselves a handful of wild flowers in the vegetable fields above the Mission compound.

On starting back for the boat we requested to "do some shopping"; but our new friends looked askance. All through the years of their residence in the place they had never done such a thing in the streets of Wanhsien, and in this land of ceremony and etiquette such a performance would be thought highly unseemly for a woman of a certain rank. We, however, were in "barbaric" English clothing, and would be recognised at once as eccentric "out-

side Kingdom" folk, and so, finally, the point was yielded in our favour, provided that we took with us a serving woman to act as chaperon and make the actual purchases.

We had bought a few odds and ends, amongst them a brown glazed flower vase, which turned out to be a native lamp, when we realised that the street was blocked from end to end with a dense crowd of many hundreds who had collected in our honour. It seemed, therefore, advisable to cut short the expedition, and descending the long flights of mud-stained steps, we were soon back in our friendly boat.

The next morning saw us on our way again—delayed somewhat by head winds and more fog, but the trackers worked on cheerfully. Never have I seen any people so cheerful, even when fighting against "long odds," as the Chinese. It seems to help them to chant while they work. The harder the work, the louder the chanting. One would have thought of it as a hindrance, and a waste of breath wanted for other purposes, but with them this does not seem to be the case. There is something peculiarly weird and delightful about this song of the Yangtse boatmen on this up-river journey. (The down-river song is different and less marked.) It swings from the treble to the bass, with a leap back to rippling heights and down to the depths, and on again, with never a moment's pause, as they work the oars backwards and forwards. Often and often

TRACKERS PULLING A BOAT UP THE RAPIDS

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have those who have listened tried to catch the notes, but they are strangely elusive, and to Western voices seem almost unproducible. Some say this is because we do not open our mouths wide enough! At Ta Chihko, our next stop after Wanhsien, we spent a Sunday. It was only a big village—built on either side of a giant stone staircase. The little brown houses formed the banisters, and ascending and descending were blue-garbed peasants. Along the shore on a stony beach, men were seeking for gold, and finding it, too, though I believe in very small quantities. Their implements were primitive enough—merely baskets on wooden stands, which see-sawed backwards and forwards, and in them the stones were shaken to and fro and the gold dust sifted out.

Christmas Day found us moored outside the town of Chung Cheo, celebrating Christmas in approved English fashion. The evening before we had made a raid on a Chinese farm in quest of a Christmas tree. The buffaloes stared at us in mild astonishment, and a dog barred the way, growling furiously. Fortunately the farmer's wife came to the rescue. We had seen a well-grown cedar in the garden, and proffered our request in broken Chinese for a bough or two, emphasising the words with a brass coin (worth about a farthing). She brought forth a hatchet and proceeded to lop off bough after bough. In spite of our vigorous protests that we had "keo-la" ("enough") she went on lopping! We took all we could carry

and beat a retreat, pursued by the dog. The last we saw of our generous friend was of a picturesque figure in blue calico standing on the terrace above us, the hatchet in her hand and a friendly smile upon her weather-beaten face. We decorated our dining-cabin with cedar boughs and red (paper) camellias in lack of holly-berries, and put persimmons and pumelo juice into the plum pudding to make up for some of the missing ingredients.

Just about Christmas time we were pursued by rumours of brigands. A boat ahead of us had been attacked, so report went, and now and again we passed rocks whereon large white characters were engraved, which ran as follows: "River way not quiet; moor early at a wharf." Mrs. P. told us of their own narrow escape from brigands a few years ago. About forty armed men attacked a mandarin's boat, thinking it belonged to the foreigners, who, however, had been unexpectedly delayed. The robbers loaded themselves with booty and carried off one of the ladies of the mandarin's household! They took the stolen goods and put them up for auction at a town in the neighbourhood, through which the mandarin himself happened to be passing: he was travelling overland in order to save time. Recognising his wife's clothes, he made enquiries, and was able to get on the track of the brigand troop.

But the most desperate, perhaps, of all the brigands of the upper Yangtse country was the famous Yu

Mantsï, who, at the head of an army of banditti, about ten years ago, held sway in Szechuan. After a reign of terror the Imperial troops succeeded in effecting his capture. Afraid, however, to put an end to the existence of so powerful a personage, they resorted to a unique plan of restoring the countryside to peace by turning the brigand chief into a high official! There was only one condition, viz. that he should keep to his own district, and if found trespassing in the domain of others, should pay the penalty of death. For some long time Yu Mantsï lived an exemplary life, and fulfilled his official duties with great success and credit to his ruling powers; but the day came, alas! when, growing tired of so limited a sphere, he strayed "out of bounds," and came to an untimely end.

Hardly a day passes without seeing the remains of a wreck. To-day it was a half-sunk cargo boat. Men on board were busily hauling out goods from the hold, and on the shore two forlorn little matting-covered shelters were pitched amidst the wreckage. On another occasion the banks were white with cotton wool, saved from a watery grave and drying in the sun. We have just come through a dangerous stretch of river. Two local pilots were taken on board to get us safely past. The Yangtse had widened out enormously, and to every side of us formidable reefs of rock lay like great grey porpoises above the rushing, foaming water. We marvelled at the skill with which our lumbering house-boat was steered

successfully through the narrow channels between the rocks.

On the 29th December we passed by Feng Tu city. There is a famous temple there said to be built over the main entrance of the Buddhist hells. Often are the cries of the spirits in torment to be heard in the precincts, and the priests do a thriving trade in the sale of passports for Hades! There are many kinds of these passports, and the ones from Feng Tu are considered the best. All we could see, looking up from the river, was a building half hidden by trees at the top of the steep rocky hill, in which, doubtless, there are many caves and inhabitants of caves.

The last day of the year was our first wet day for a whole month. In spite of the drenching rain, however, our boatmen kept on cheerily rowing, chanting, tracking, until at last, drenched through to the skin, they put up their matting shelter for the night and "turned in."

A few more days should bring us to the end of our journey, but it is no use asking the captain for a date. To give the exact number of "li" to the next place is looked upon as unlucky, and will mean that we shall never get there at all, or only after some mishap. The weather has grown wintry, the scenery is no longer as beautiful as it was; the river has widened out considerably, and the mountains have dwindled in size. We pass unassuming little towns of one-storied buildings, huddled together round grand stone bridges. There is a saying that to build a bridge and repair a

road in this world are two excellent ways of accumulating merit in the next. One truly magnificent bridge at Chung Cheo was demolished by floods a few years ago. The mandarin, seeing the havoc caused by the river, grew indignant with the Buddhist priests for being unable to stop the ravages of the water. He ordered them to go out to the falling bridge and pray for help. They were obliged to comply, and every one of them was speedily swept away and drowned !

To-day we passed Chang Sheo—the last important town before Ch'ong King, our final destination.

Years ago, in the grounds of a certain family mansion in Chang Sheo, a stream of water welled up miraculously and bathed the leaves of a wonderful plant, which was said to have the power of conferring the gift of longevity on its possessor. A ruling mandarin of the place determined to appropriate this priceless treasure for his own benefit. Hardly, however, had he commenced to put the plan into action when the well of water dried up and the longevity plant vanished from the face of the earth.

You will see that we have got into the land of legends. There is a saying which runs something like this :—

"Szechuan is an evil spirit region
Where truth lies dead and falsehood rules the reason,"

and they tell me the sorcerer's shops are in almost every other street in the large cities.

January 4th.

Our thirty-two days on the house-boat are at an end. The heaped-up city of Ch'ong King lies above us. First the waterside, with its fringe of masts, then a layer of mat and bamboo huts built on wooden legs, above them strata on strata of walls above walls and roofs above roofs, piled up in inextricable confusion, and over all a veil of mist, white and clinging—a likely haunt this for sorcerers and magicians.

But no more for the present. I will get this ready for the first post-boat that goes. In any case, it will take two months or more to get to you.

Yours,

V.

Ch'ong King,

January, 1908.

There is a saying in Szechuan that the "dogs bark when they see the sun," and the story goes that a small child in this house came running in one unusually bright morning to ask what "that queer thing was up in the sky." Certainly in winter time Ch'ong King is a city of the mist. Often for six weeks at a stretch the sun is practically non-existent; on other occasions it shines through the mist, but seldom dispels it. If in the morning the fog is so thick that the surroundings are blotted out, there is some chance of a sight of the hills across the river before the day is over; if, on the contrary, the hills are visible in the early morning, it is a sure sign that rain is on its way.

We are once more enjoying home comforts, in spite of the fact that we are about one thousand six hundred miles in the interior of China. Mr. and Mrs. B., of the China Inland Mission, have kindly invited us to stay with them. Their house—a substantial foreign house—is situated on one of the higher levels of this town of many layers, and looks down on a sea of roofs built tier above tier on the steep banks of the river. The cellar-like buildings of the "lower

regions," through which we were carried in our sedan-chairs the day of our arrival, left a dismal impression on my mind. It was a nightmare ride. From the waterside we were borne up long flights of wet, greasy steps, black with mud; then the steps turned into steep, uphill alley-ways—one could hardly call them streets—between dark, dank dwellings, with mud floors and windowless walls, and yawning black holes for entrances—more like caverns than houses, and only dignified by the name of human habitations because, peering into them as we passed, we could see impassive faces peering back at us, and blue-garbed figures moving in the shadows as they came forward to look at the "strange barbarians." The alley-ways turned into steps again, and as we mounted higher and higher the streets grew cleaner, and shops took the place of the caverns.

At a sharp corner a lamp-post, enormously high, towering forty feet or so above the roofs of the houses, attracted our attention; it was meant not for us, but for the "world invisible," to guide "wandering souls" back to their homes! You will wonder how they ever managed to get lost. One idea seems to be that when a person is very ill, lying, perhaps, in a state of unconsciousness, he has "lost his soul" for the time being; and there are many ways, they tell me, of bringing it back, all of them just about as sensible as that of the "sky-lamp."

It is astonishing how much trouble is taken to keep away the evil spirits. Would you have thought a

A TYPICAL STREET

From a Photograph by H. H. Curtis.

RIVERSIDE HOUSES AT CH'ONG KING

little mirror over the door would have been of much use? It is supposed, however, to be exceedingly efficacious, especially when the characters meaning "*one good*" are inscribed across the glass. There is a saying, "One good deed will cancel a thousand evil deeds," and demons, presumably, do not feel at home in the houses of those who have "cancelled their evil deeds" (or *say* that they have done so, which apparently comes to the same thing). Besides which, the sight of their own evil faces in the mirror is usually enough to frighten them away! Other people put a kind of eel-trap over any specially unlucky house. It is made of bamboo, and is so contrived that the demon, having once got in, cannot get out again.

But this city of "demon-haunted" streets, piled up by the riverside, is, as you know, an open treaty port and one of the most important commercial centres in the west of China. It seems to export most things, from opium to coal, from silk to bristles, from salt to wax, from drugs to feathers, and, as far as I can make out, it does not get much from foreign lands instead, except Indian yarn and Lancashire cotton.

If the streets and the alley-ways are gloomy in the daylight, at night-time they are weird tunnels of mystery. Everyone carries his own oil-paper lantern. They look like brilliant red-and-gold fireflies, flashing here and there. The pavements are narrow, hardly more than six feet across, and often the curved roofs of the houses almost meet overhead.

Borne along in my sedan-chair, I feel as though I

were being carried through the mysterious alley-ways of some underground world. A few years ago an attempt to provide street lights was made by the authorities, but the beggars *stole all the lamps.* This was, perhaps, hardly surprising in a town where there are no police. It seems there was another attempt made to provide police as well as lamps, though, presumably, not at the same time. The police, being absolutely untrained, proved of no use whatever. At the present date, however, a fresh force is undergoing special training and is expected to appear on the scene before long. Meanwhile one is astonished that the streets are as orderly as they are, considering the dense crowds of pedestrians always coming and going.

A few weeks ago the place swarmed with beggars of all degrees in every state of decay. Beggars seem to me one of the saddest sights in the "Celestial Land." Begging is a legitimate profession, and in order to qualify for the most lucrative posts, all measures are resorted to. We were told of a case in which a man had had his legs broken as a child and turned back over the shoulders. One ankle was so manipulated as to admit of the foot being twisted round and round independently of the leg. The poor, tortured owner crept round the streets as best he could, and showed off to an inquisitive audience, by means of a piece of string, the wonders of the moving foot.

In many places the residents pay a tax to the chief

of the beggars to secure peace; people who refuse to do this may be subjected to untold annoyance. The beggars gather in their hundreds—I had almost said thousands—and clamour as one man until they have received that which they consider their due.

Just outside the upper gates of the city the officials, following the lead of their colleagues in the capital of the province, have built a large and substantial building, or set of buildings, in walled-in grounds, in which all the beggars of Ch'ong King—or all, at least, who could be discovered—are now collected, and are divided, so they tell us, into two classes :—

1. Those who *can* work and *will* are well fed.
2. Those who *can* work and *won't* are badly fed.

For the sick ones, of course, especial provision is made.

At the present time Ch'ong King is the fortunate possessor of a very able Hsien magistrate. Owing to his strenuous efforts the town has been swept of most of its opium dens, as well as of its beggars. People live in a good deal of awe of him; he has an uncomfortable way of looking into things with his own eyes and is not easy to hoodwink. Every now and again he rides out in state with his servants and military escort, and enters some place where he has business to transact. His retinue waits outside for him to reappear; but time goes on and there is no sign of him. Meanwhile this energetic official has changed his grand silk clothing for the humble attire of a coolie, and has gone home by some back way, dropping

in on unsuspecting citizens, in order to see if sundry commands given in the past have been obeyed.

"Who are you? What business is it of yours?" they ask indignantly of the strangely well-informed but most inquisitive coolie.

"I am the 'Pa Hsien,'" comes the answer in tones that are unmistakable.

Thanks in great measure to the energies of the "Pa Hsien," opium cultivation in the district round Ch'ong King is rapidly being put a stop to. Our host tells us of great tracts of country which a year or two ago were ablaze with poppies—white, mauve, and pink—and now not a vestige of the plant will be found there. In various places along the banks of the river we have noticed fields in which vegetables and poppies are growing side by side, the practical Chinese having no doubt thought to himself that supposing the authorities ordered the poppies to be destroyed, he would at least have the vegetable crop left to go on with.

This morning, for the first time since our arrival here, the sunshine has broken through the mist. It is like a warm spring day in England, and Deborah and I started forth for a long walk amongst the graves. It sounds a gruesome place to choose, but we could not very well help ourselves. I will explain why. Ch'ong King is a kind of peninsula, built on a tongue of rock, or rather a narrow, rocky hill wedged in between two rivers, the Yangtse and the Kia Ling. There is only one *land* gate to the city,

and that gate leads out down flights of steps past a handful of tiny shops and houses to the " city of the dead."

Down in a dell stands the newly erected beggars' home, and around and beyond for several miles lie the grass-grown mounds of many generations of graves.

We walked and we walked along the main road to Chentu between the graves. There was a great deal of traffic, coming and going—men carrying burdens, men carrying sedan-chairs, men carrying only themselves, or sitting on the backs of donkeys or minute, emaciated ponies, almost hiding the creatures from view with their voluminous garments and saddle-bags.

At last we arrived at a tiny village, with streets so narrow and houses so crowded and overhanging that the sunlight barely squeezed through at all, and as we stood for a moment looking round, a strange burden was borne past us on a litter. We caught sight of a pair of little feet in daintily embroidered shoes peeping out from beneath a coverlet of gorgeous silk, and on the top of the coverlet a hale and hearty cock of pale plumage stood at ease surveying the scene. There was something suspiciously stiff about the attitude of the feet, something curiously rigid about the well-dressed head of the recumbent owner, and, looking again, we realised that the men who stepped along so briskly through this indifferent crowd were bearing a dead burden. The cock, which should have

been a *white* cock, was in attendance in order to *lead the spirit in the right direction.* Eventually the bird will be killed and the coffin sprinkled with its "sacred" blood. The dead girl had been dressed, of course, in her best clothes, according to approved custom, and probably in an odd number of garments, as an even number is considered unlucky and might entail the death of another member of the family. There is only one thing tabooed, namely, *fur*, for fear that the wearer in the next world may be transformed into an animal!

On our way back, after re-entering the land gate of the city, we turned off on to an open stretch of levelled ground, called the "Parade Ground," surrounded on two sides by the city wall, from whence one can obtain one of the best views of Ch'ong King —the tangled mass of shabby brown roofs on the verge of toppling into the great river below, the grave-grown hills to the north, the grave-grown hills to the west, and to the east the Kia Ling River flowing on towards the Yangtse.

The river bed is partly sand, partly water, at this time of the year, and already the thrifty Celestial has planted the sand out in vegetable crops! No place is too poor, no hill-slope too inaccessible, no river bed too shifting, no trouble too great for Chinese industry. As we craned our necks to get a view of the outer side of the wall—we were standing on the top of the wall at the time looking over the edge—little patches of bright green lettuce plants

peered up at us from the earth that was clinging between the crevices of the foundation stones.

On our way down to the Mission compound more signs of thrift met us at every turn. Feathers were lying in their millions drying on the ground, the very air seemed disagreeably full of feather down. Cotton cloth, freshly dried, was hanging from a line, and the women at the doors of their hovel-like houses were busy pasting strips of rag of every sort and every colour on stiff bits of sandy brown paper. The paper was in lengths of about a foot and a half square, and each was covered from end to end with the scraps of coloured rag. They were hung on lines to dry, and laid out on flat stones for the same purpose.

"These piece things call what?" we asked.

And what do you think they were? Why, the embryo soles of native shoes. Thus when a garment becomes too old to wear any longer—although the Chinese women mend their garments so superbly that their existence *as* garments is often indefinitely prolonged—but when the day does arrive when they are finally torn up, there is no question of throwing away the rags, they are merely *made into shoe soles.*

It is said that Jews are almost unknown in China—save for a remnant of the race at Kai Feng Fu—and the reason given is that they have never been able to compete with the Chinese in matters of thrift and economy and all-round cleverness. Certainly they are a wonderful people. The idea that they are down-

trodden and oppressed is quite an erroneous one. The masses have great power and know how to use it. Should the authorities enact a new law, or impose a new tax which the people consider unjust, they protest in so practical a manner that the law is either repealed or modified, or the tax rescinded. I will give you an instance of a case of this kind here in Ch'ong King a few years ago. An enterprising official passed a law to the effect that every article purchased *in* the town and taken *out* of the town should pay duty to the Government. In order to enforce this new regulation officials were stationed at the city gates to search all goods carried out.

The people protested, but to no purpose. They forthwith inaugurated a plan which in a few days would have had the most far-reaching results. They organised a strike amongst the rice-carriers. No one was permitted to bring rice into the city. Shop after shop was closed, and business of almost every kind was at a standstill.

The offending mandarin, in the indirect manner approved of in the " land of the Celestials," appointed a " middle man " to enquire into the matter, which meant practically that the people had won the day. The new tax was repealed, the blame fell on the "middle man," who had been installed in office for the simple purpose of providing a "scapegoat," and thereby the mandarin, as the saying goes, " saved his face " ; and the " middle man," of course, had none to lose, as everybody knew that his share in the business was

purely fictitious. The people got what they wanted, and the "scapegoat" was secretly rewarded with a sum of money.

This "saving of face"—of appearances (though it means much more than that)—is of far greater importance to a Chinese than a Westerner. It seems the keynote to much of their social life, and crops up on most unexpected occasions, turning black into white and vice versa. Someone was telling me, for instance, of a conversation between a missionary and a Chinese the other day on the subject of the "Parable of the Vineyard." Discussing the case of the two sons, the one who said he would go and didn't go, and the other who said he wouldn't go and went, the Celestial answered that the former was the more commendable, as he not only "saved his own face, but his father's"!

But I must not linger over these metaphysical subjects when all our packing has still to be done for the road journey of three hundred miles or so across country to the city of Chentu. It is by no means ordinary packing. The luggage has to be carefully weighed into packages neither over nor under forty "catties" * apiece. Each coolie will carry two of these packages, one at either end of his bamboo pole. They must balance each other evenly, otherwise he will complain, and time will be lost readjusting the burdens. If both weigh less than forty "catties" apiece the *other* men will complain, and they know almost

* A "catty," one English pound and a third.

at a glance if there is any difference in weight between their own burdens and their neighbour's. Our cabin trunks, however, have to be arranged differently. They are carried slung on a pole borne between two men, and the rule to be observed in this case is not twice eighty, but twice sixty. Unless you have done it yourself, you would hardly believe how difficult it is to get the weight exactly right. It comes a bit over or a bit under all the time. As to the bedding, it is first rolled in bundles, covered with stout oiled sheeting, and then packed into gigantic hampers to be slung on poles.

The food for eleven days (ten travelling days and one Sunday), the plate, glass and linen, etc., are being brought by Mr. and Mrs. P., of the "L. M. S.," who are journeying to the capital at the same time and have kindly permitted us to join them. They will have their three servants, so we shall not need to take one of our own.

It will be quite a cavalcade : four sedan-chairs with three or four bearers apiece, eight or nine coolies carrying luggage, three servants, one "futeo," * and two Yamen runners or "tsai-ren," a kind of military escort, not in the least necessary, but insisted on by the officials, who feel that by taking these precautions they at least will be able to *say* that they have done their part in trying to protect the foreigner *should anything happen.* They bear with them an official letter, a species of passport, concerning us, which has

* Foreman over the coolies.

to be shown at the Yamen at each new "hsien" city, when the military escort is changed.

We start to-morrow morning, January 13th.

Fortunately, by this time we have been drilled into chair etiquette, and know that it is only permitted to a *man* to step over the cross-bar in front of the chair in getting in or out. We, as belonging to the, in China, distinctly inferior sex, must be scrupulously careful to step over the side, otherwise the front chair-bearer may refuse to go further, and will in any case consider himself horribly injured, imagining that boils will grow out on his shoulders if he touches them with the cross-bar which has been so ruthlessly stepped over.

I wonder how many other points of etiquette there are to remember.

Let us hope we shall get to the end of the journey without a scene!

Yours,

V.

On the main road between
Ch'ong King and Chentu,
January, 1908.

By this time we have been three days on the road. It is like a journey in a dream. One feels detached from one's surroundings, as though one were an idol being carried in a procession, sitting propped up in a sedan-chair in solitary state, visible only when the curtain in front is raised. The people who pass by look at one curiously, and some of them stand and gaze.

Hour after hour, mile after mile, the bearers go on and on, seldom absolutely stopping, but every hundred yards or so lingering for half a minute, chanting out, "Pang go! pang go!" and shifting from one shoulder to another the short shoulder pole from which the long poles are partly hung. This they do with the regularity of a machine, and meanwhile we are being borne along one of the famous roads of China, for six hundred miles paved with stone slabs laid crosswise, which change as the country grows mountainous into stone steps; but the road is seldom more than five feet wide, and sometimes less.

From the grave-strewn hills of Ch'ong King we

passed along the mountain-side and looked down through a lattice of fir boughs on to a sea of mist below. The mountain was a ridge between two rivers, the Yangtse and Kia Ling, but we could see neither the one nor the other on account of the mist. Under memorial-stone arches, which cropped up suddenly and unexpectedly with no apparent reason, like things do in dreams, the paved road dipped downhill once more and meandered amongst rice fields, where the surface of the water was covered with crimson weed.

On the second day we started forth before it was light, a picturesque cavalcade lit up by glowing red and yellow paper lanterns. The dawn was slowly breaking, a weird, mysterious twilight in a blue, shadowy world. We climbed steep steps up into the mountains again, past groups of plumed bamboos in clusters of three, like gigantic Prince of Wales's feathers, past clumps of dark pines and rocks dripping with ferns and moss, and back as by magic to the interminable stretches of vegetable fields, homesteads which might have been cowsheds, and buffaloes carefully shod in straw sandals. We rubbed our eyes to make sure we were awake, and the next creatures that came along were pigs, also carefully shod. It seemed they had a long way to go to market, and this was done to protect their feet!

The road disappeared now and again through arched doorways. We followed it, and found ourselves not in a house, but in a street, and realised that our arched door was but the covered way into

a village. We were carried through dense, seething crowds in country markets. The greater the crowd the quicker we seemed to go. "Pei-a, pei-a, pei-a!" * shouted our chair-bearers, and swept on regardless of opposition, pushing aside those who got in the way, and crashing ruthlessly into the ribs of any who did not move far enough aside.

The rule of the road appears to be that when a chair-bearer has warned people by his shouts that he is coming, he is perfectly at liberty to push over anyone who still obstructs his path. Considering that there is hardly standing room for all even before the advent of the chairs, one marvels that they can make sufficient space to let us get by. It gives one rather a start sometimes to see a woman carrying a baby on her back turn resolutely round and make a buffer of the baby. On closer inspection, however, one realises that there is "method in her madness." The baby is rendered almost invulnerable by the thick wadded garments in which it is swathed, and so held that no real harm is done.

A prosperous merchant in purple silks and a windbonnet of scarlet and turquoise-blue cloth "danced" before us like a will-o'-the-wisp on the first day of our journey. We never succeeded in catching him up, and at each inn he arrived before us and took the best rooms. We had to be content with the second best.

Here in the west of China there are no "kêngs"

* "Mind your back!"

as in the north, but wooden bedsteads, very decayed in appearance, which fill up most of the available space; walls trimmed with cobwebs artistically draped, and a mud floor that seemed suspiciously soft under the beds; a table one inch deep in grease and dirt, on which a saucer of oil with a lighted wick gave forth more smell than light. The windows were of torn paper, and the barn-like roof seldom rain-proof. Our oil sheeting was invaluable. We spread it over the bed and turned it up against the wall by way of a fortification to ward off likely excursionists, and kept ourselves and our belongings as much as possible out of reach of the marauders, which fortunately at this winter season are by no means as active or as numerous as they are in the hot weather.

Wang San, the servant, on arrival at these inns brings us hot water from the inn kitchen. There is often a slightly culinary smell about it, and occasionally a suspicious piece of cooked vegetable floating on the top. Still, it is a boon to be able to get hot water at all. But water *of a sort* seems plentiful enough, and the inns on the high-road to Chentu are said to be some of the best in China. I am getting used to them now, but they were rather a shock to begin with.

The gentleman of the scarlet wind-bonnet started earlier than we did the second day of our journey, and was no longer there to seize on the "shang fangtsï" (the best rooms) before our arrival.

These Szechuan inns are built in a different

style to the northern ones. The entrances even now take me by surprise. Suddenly, in the midst of a crowded thoroughfare, the chair-bearers turn suddenly to the right or the left and dip into what appears to be a narrow, dark paved passage in the middle of an eating-house, where culinary operations are in progress. It turns out to be the inn kitchen, but the chair-bearers do not stop. They hurry off up the paved passage, which becomes a long, narrow yard. It reminds one of a stable mews, but it is the main hall of the inn, and the doors opening on to it on either side are the bedrooms! At the far end, on a slightly higher level, stands a small pavilion; this is the "shang fangtsï." It is sometimes shut off from the main yard by a thin wooden partition, or a screen, highly ornamental, fixed in front of the doors, which helps probably to check the ingress of evil spirits. As a rule there are two side rooms leading out of the "shang fangtsï," and this suite is annexed by the first guest who is willing to pay the price, which, at the outside, comes to about threepence-halfpenny of our money!

A coolie, for twenty "cash" (a little *less* than a halfpenny), can even hire a quilt as well as a place to lie down in for the night! There is only one stipulation, viz. that he shall first wash his feet and ankles. These ablutions go on in public, and those who pass must pick their way carefully through the spilt water.

The "shang fangtsï" is larger and loftier than the other rooms, but it usually smells of pig-sties.

The floor is of wood, the furniture consists of a big table and a few substantial chairs, and a classic touch is supplied by some high-flown sentiment in gold characters inscribed over the doors—queer little phrases, unintelligible save to a Chinese scholar, and very possibly each scholar would give a different interpretation. What would they make, I wonder, of "stars many, clouds wait," or "gold horse, gem hall"?

In the courtyard of a temple we saw some of the militia men belonging to the "tuan" (district) assembling for drill. We happened to be on foot at the time, and lingered for a moment to see the military display. The embryo soldiers gathered round us with much interest and allowed us to look at their rifles. They were of the oddest, most primitive pattern and horribly rusty. On one the trigger had been securely tied down with string, but in the apparent absence of any ammunition the trigger was quite as serviceable one way as the other. Probably the owners of the rifles have to pay for their own powder and shot. This, I remember, was the case with the armed police at Chefoo, with the result that none was ever used.

We asked one of the riflemen his age. "Over ten," he replied. Someone murmured sixteen, but he looked about twelve! However, even the rusty rifles were an advance on the bows and arrows which were still in use only a few years back (1898). In those days the "attitude of the bowman when discharging his

shaft was of more consequence than the hitting of the target ! " *

People at Chefoo used to tell us they remembered the Chinese soldiers after the Chino-Japanese War fleeing from a disastrous engagement, many of them still carrying fans and bird-cages !

According to one eminent authority, they have all the characteristics of a good soldier, being " sober, obedient, easily managed, and very quick at learning."

Later on there passed us a cavalcade moving rapidly along the flagged path amongst the vegetable fields, soldiers in the bright scarlet silk jackets slashed with black velvet, their " queues " wound round their heads, and hidden from view by a black cloth worn turban fashion, guns slung across their shoulders, and *umbrellas* of shining yellow oilskin. They were guarding a long line of coolies, each of whom carried two heavy wooden boxes containing silver, the contributions, namely, granted by the various cities we have passed through for the maintenance of the provincial army. The soldiers are paid about three " taels " (nine shillings) a month and have to keep themselves ! What would Tommy Atkins say to that ?

Coming from the opposite direction a wedding procession approached, headed by men carrying the wedding presents—joints of pork, fowls (still alive, of course), cotton cloths, silk garments, sweetmeats on trays, furniture, etc.—followed by a troop of little boys waving flags, then the red bridal chair with

* *Break-up of China*, by Lord C. Beresford.

scarlet curtains drawn, and finally a ragged band of musicians playing nasal music and beating drums.

. . . . . .

Yesterday we did forty miles, a long stage, and stopped for the night at an unusually well-kept inn, "The Fount of Spring." To-day our men have had an easy time of it to make up, but poor Deborah a hard one. An hour and a half brought us to the banks of the Ni River, where we embarked in boats —chairs, coolies, passengers—and dropped down with the swiftly flowing current between steep, wooded banks from which feathery bamboos bent over to catch the reflection of themselves in the water. We were enjoying the change of locomotion when, alas! the sight of our coolies (several of whom were suffering from scabies) reclining at ease amongst our cushions in the chairs which we had temporarily deserted, and which had been hoisted on to another boat, somewhat overshadowed the future.

We halted for midday at one of the best inns we have yet come across. Our lunch-table stood invitingly in a courtyard in front of the guest-room, shut off from the inn yard by elaborately ornamented green gates, and adorned by shrubs and oleanders in pots, but the meal was delayed by the disappearance of Deborah. The "futeo" was summoned, messengers despatched, and we waited anxiously. A card had just been sent to the mandarin with a request for Yamen runners to scour the streets, when the

missing chair was carried in at the gates. The men, it seemed, had gone right through the town to some eating-house of their own; Deborah had been set down outside to await their pleasure. The blame was the "futeo's," who should have kept his men together.

Hardly had we commenced our repast when the mandarin himself arrived post-haste to look into the matter, and to apologise, if there were anything to apologise for! I only mention this to show the care that is taken of "foreigners" in these days of compensations and indemnities. There is a saying in China that "when the officials frown the dogs frown," and just now the frowns have changed to smiles, and the dogs follow suit.

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This morning five trim little soldiers instead of two appeared to escort us on our way, a mark of especial attention on the part of the mandarin, each with blue cotton bag containing sword and umbrella slung across his shoulders like golf clubs; but we contrived to get rid of three of them before we had gone far, thereby reducing somewhat the expenses of the day. We had a shrewd suspicion that of the remaining two, one "sweated out" his job to a tramp, whose sole mark of office (lent for the occasion) was an official hat with scarlet crown and turned-up brim; his feet were bare save for a pair of old sandals, his blue cotton gown old and shrunken, and his spreading

TWO MEMBERS OF OUR MILITARY AND CIVIL ESCORT

ON THE ROAD TO CHENTU

mushroom hat of straw hung down his back to make room for the borrowed "plume."

In the afternoon we came to the salt wells. Salt, as you probably know, is a Government monopoly, but even so it is absurdly cheap. The wells lined the banks of a river, a blue-green river the colour of an Alpine lake. The apparatus was of the simplest and consisted of a wheel, made of wood and bamboo, worked by a buffalo, and a bamboo rope about three hundred feet long to which was attached a bamboo cylinder. This was lowered into the well and by suction brought up the saline water, discharging it into a large vat to be well boiled, then shifted into other vats to be re-boiled, and so on.

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To-day, Sunday, we have spent at Tsï Cheo. Unfortunately, the best room was occupied on our arrival yesterday by the soldiers with the silver who had passed us on the way. Our bedroom has no window at all, but there are holes in the roof to allow for ventilation. A latticed door leading into a back-yard can be opened on occasions to give light. This is the first place we have come to on our road journey in which we have seen any English-speaking people. An American mission has a station here, and they kindly invited us to spend the day at their pleasant "American" house on the slope of the hill overlooking the town.

Above us, on the top of the hill, stands a great

Buddhist temple, built in memory of a water-carrier who after his death was canonised, and his likeness is said to be preserved in a graven image of a very plebeian cast of countenance. Long, long ago, so the story runs, the water-carrier spent day after day, year after year, carrying water from the river below to the top of the hill. He worked well and faithfully, but the day came when his strength failed him. In despair he sat himself down and wept, and as he wept, behold, the gods showed pity. From the very ground at his feet a well of clear water oozed forth. It is still there, and the stone basin of it almost fills the inner court of the temple.

We wandered through the deserted buildings, where, on dust-clad altars, gilded gods, painted and bedecked, loomed grotesquely in the shadow. In one single pavilion over a hundred hideous idols, from giants to Lilliputians, lined the walls. There are said to be three hundred and sixty trades in China, and every trade has its patron divinity. That of the tailors goes by the name of "Hien Yuen," and we are told that "before his time men wore raiment of *fig-leaves*"! The god of medicine seemed the most popular in this temple of Tsï Cheo. Parts of his body had been worn into holes and shiny dents by the supplicants of many generations, who had rubbed their own afflicted limbs against their wooden counterparts.

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On Monday we started betimes and travelled for miles through interminable vegetable fields. At our midday halt the first room of the inn was adorned with a coffin besides the customary furniture. Whether occupied or not we lacked the courage to discover. Fortunately there was no question of spending the night inside it.

I recollect our host in Peking telling us that he arrived at his destination too late one day to find any sleeping room in the inn. The landlord, as a supreme favour, offered his new coffin, which was there in the house ready for emergencies. Our friend, alas! hesitated a moment. An onlooker stepped forward and offered to exchange places—he would give up his bed and take the coffin. The offer was accepted, but as our friend lay hour after hour trying in vain to sleep, and almost "eaten up" by insects many and various, he realised how much wiser it would have been to have made use of the spotlessly clean and absolutely new coffin. The Chinese apparently do not recoil from coffins as much as we do. I am told that people who are dying are often dressed in their gala clothes and placed there ready for the end!

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The weather has turned cold again. It seems strange in these wintry blasts to see the sugar harvests being gathered in. Sugar plantations are plentiful in this part of the province, and every now and again one comes across a sugar factory.

We dropped into one to see the men at work. Behold again the invaluable buffalo! A pair yoked together were turning great grinding-stones, by which the sugar-canes were crushed and the juice pressed out. A bamboo pipe or tube conducted the juice into a monster vat boiling over a furnace. There were seven of these vats, the contents of each at a different stage in the process of completion. In the last of the seven the sugar had solidified. It looked like toffee of a dark brown-red colour. Men stood beside the vats stirring, mixing, and ladling the boiling liquid from one vat to the other with long wooden ladles, throwing in every now and then lumps of white grease to keep the sugar from sticking.

At Tsï Cheo and other places there are sugar refineries, and I am told that *black mud* is largely used for this purpose. A thick layer of it is placed on top of the sugar, and in course of time draws out the impurities!

Further along the road we came upon an old man sitting under an umbrella awning, with a little table before him, who smilingly stopped the way! He handed us a book of signatures, and explained that he was collecting subscriptions for the upkeep of this—the main thoroughfare from Ch'ong King to Chentu. We presented him with twenty cents (about fivepence), and he let us pass.

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Our last day on the road—and a wet one! We spent a cold night in the mountains, and this morning had to climb down the slippery paved path to the Chentu Plain. The chair-bearers could hardly keep their feet. First one slipped and almost fell, and then another. For fear that the chairs should go down altogether we got out and walked, and then it was our turn to slip and slither. The bearers were wearing their hats, things like large limpets made of straw. They have a great objection to getting their heads wet. Superstition has it that every drop of rain that falls on their hair will produce a (hush! I will whisper the word)—a louse!

They have many superstitions, these chair-bearers, and it seems there are three places where nothing will induce them either to set the chair down or shift the shoulder-pole—the front of a temple, as it might offend the idols; or on a bridge, as the bridge-guardian will be annoyed; or in front of a chair-shop, for fear that someone will take their job away from them. Rather pathetic this last! and from a Westerner's point of view it would not be much of a job. They get four hundred "cash" * a day—start work before daylight, and go on very often till after dark—and out of their earnings they must pay forty "cash" to the man who "pao's" † them, and forty to the "futeo" who looks after them, and buy their own food and pay for their own night's lodging; and

* About eightpence.

† Recommends them and guarantees their good behaviour.

when out of work it must be hard indeed to "know how to go over the days." *

The morning's trudge brought us to the famous Chentu Plain, said to be one of the most fertile tracts of land in China. The soil bears three, and sometimes four, crops in the year, and even now, in these winter months, amongst terraces of watery rice-fields, there are long green stretches of young peas and budding beans, springing wheat and poppy, and probably quantities of rape, which is grown chiefly for oil and is ubiquitous in Szechuan.

But the Lilliputian wheelbarrows, which are a peculiarity of the Chentu Plain, interested us more than the crops. They somewhat resemble children's go-carts made for adults, and have one wheel only, which runs in a deep groove, worn down and smoothed out by many generations of wheelbarrows in the mud track by the side of the paved road. We hired a couple for the cost of one halfpenny each for thirteen "li" (four miles and a bit), the market price, and off we went. The downhill progress was quite inspiriting. By asking the man to "pao" (run), and by raising one's feet from the foot-rest by the wheel so as not to feel the jar, it was like a gentle form of "coasting."

Now and again a barrow would approach from the opposite direction, and observing the strange contrast of dignity and absurdity in the passive-faced Chinese sitting in state on his lowly perambulator,

* The Chinese equivalent of our phrase "to know how to make two ends meet."

keeping his silk robes out of the mud, we were given a chance of "seeing ourselves as others see us."

The safe passing of wheelbarrows is not an easy matter. One, of course, must yield possession of the groove and wallow in the sea of mud and ruts at the side. If the passenger is wise, he will temporarily absent himself from his barrow and resume his seat when the wheel has once more got back to the worn track.

It was getting dark when we passed in at the east gates of the city of Chentu. From the open land and comparative quiet of the vegetable fields we found ourselves suddenly hurled into the midst of a surging crowd, a deafening hubbub—everybody shouting and nobody listening—each one trying to move on, to come in or go out, and everybody obstructing everybody else's way.

As the throng heaved to this side and that I suddenly perceived the servant belonging to our friends of the house-boat, who thrust a letter into my hand. He yelled out something I could not hear, and I shouted in return. At that moment Mr. P. came to our rescue. We were expected, it seemed, at the house of some friends of friends in the street of the "Green Dragon," in a far-distant quarter of the city. It was getting late, and we had to press on. So bidding farewell to our kind escort, whose road lay in another direction, Deborah and I were borne away into the darkness.

The streets seemed never-ending, and were but

dimly lit, merely punctured here and there by lamps belonging to shops. It was evident the "futeo" and his men were not sure of the way. At last, in a dusky side street, our chairs were set down and the bearers gathered round to rest and smoke. Then the "futeo" bought some torches. He carried a flaming one just in front of my chair as on we went again.

It seemed to me we must have got out of the city into the suburbs, out of the suburbs into the country, when finally, after twisting many corners and passing many walls, we found ourselves being carried up the flagged pathway of an English garden, lawns on either side of us, and lights glowing behind windows under a deep verandah.

A Chinese servant made us welcome. There was no one at home, he said, "they had all gone to 'li-pai.'" * We were so late that no doubt they had given us up; but we felt like the invaders of the house of the three bears in the fairy story as we established ourselves in a luxurious English bedroom, got rid of our road-stained garments, and then dined in splendour, waited on by the Chinese boy.

Now we are in a cosy drawing-room that makes us think of home, sunk in the snug depths of arm-chairs drawn up to a blazing fire, with *Punch* and a *Weekly Times* to remind us that we have not seen an English paper for several months. The only trouble is that Deborah thinks we must have come to the wrong house. The Chinese boy would be too polite to tell

* Church.

us we were not expected, and his wide smile is inscrutable. Anyway, I will finish this to post, and will add a P.S. to tell you what happens when the "three bears" come home.

Yours,

V.

P.S.—The sound of many voices and the stir of many feet aroused us from our slumbers by the fire. The door opened to admit a long stream of people, our hostess amongst them, who allayed Deborah's fears by giving us the heartiest of welcomes.

There seem to be nine or ten other guests here besides ourselves. All the foreign residents of the city are apparently keeping open house this week, on the occasion of the "West China Missionary Conference," at which representatives from all the western provinces will be present, besides various eminent sinologues and ecclesiastical dignitaries from other parts of the empire.

Chentu,

February.

Picture fifteen Bank Holidays in England, one on top of the other, with no intermission—shops shut—business at a standstill, pleasure-makers wearied to death, and the world out of joint. Transfer the fifteen Bank Holidays to China and you have the New Year's festival.

People will tell you that there is an unwritten law in China which ordains that all debts shall be paid at the close of the old year, and that, in this respect, England might follow the Chinese lead with advantage; but there is another side to the question. It is quite true that the last few days before the advent of the new year half the population goes out either paying or collecting debts. Very often, however, it seems only a matter of "readjustment"—borrowing from Peter, for instance, to pay Paul, and settling with Peter by negotiating a loan with Barnabas. No one seems to be above borrowing money—in China. Rich or poor, it is all the same. Debts appear to add a zest to life. But sometimes credit has run so low that "Peter" will not lend, but "Paul," according to the law of the land, cannot press his suit until the fifteen days of the New Year's holiday have

expired, and there are instances—not a few—in which the debtor goes under altogether, and takes leave of life rather than "lose face" in the eyes of his fellow-citizens.

I now realise why, on leaving Ch'ong King, our chair-bearers were pursued by the innkeepers at the first halting-place, and after a wordy warfare, which in one case ended in blows, the claims were settled, or, at all events, a truce effected, by the intervention of the "foreign teacher."

There having been, therefore, a "general post" in matter of debts, the next "game" to be played makes "confusion worse confounded"—for during the first days of the New Year's holiday, gambling, one of the curses of China, is actually sanctioned by the Imperial Government, and at this time of the year is indulged in to an almost incredible extent by young and old, rich and poor, in the open street, in the courts and in the houses, at all hours of the day and night.

I am glad we saw Chentu before it shut up shop and retired into private life. We had heard so much of this western metropolis, with all its modern improvements, its schools and colleges, its arsenals and mints, its smart troops and well-trained police force, and felt not a little curious to see this advanced city standing alone in its glory, in the midst of towns and villages which savour more of the past than the present.

In order to get a "bird's-eye view" of our sur-

roundings, we climbed up to the city wall, and walked for a couple of miles or so on the top of it. Fourteen miles would have taken us the whole way round, but there was no inducement to go so far. It was the dullest walk I have had for some time. The top of the wall—forty feet wide—built of stone, white and bare, made one think of some deserted seaside parade, minus the sea. To one side of us the flat green stretches of the Chentu Plain, interminable vegetable fields dotted by tiny wooded islets of cypress and bamboo, and away in the distance a bank of clouds, or the snow mountains of Thibet, whichever you have eyes to see. On the other side the long level stretch of brown roofs, broken by an occasional cluster of trees or a patch of allotment gardens—all so flat, so monotonous, with nothing standing out, nothing to arrest attention.

Down in the streets themselves, however, there is no monotony. Chentu is getting ready for the New Year. The pavements are crowded with stalls selling New Year's "fairings"; street hawkers pass carrying huge bundles of grotesque magenta-pink masks—or wooden erections high above their heads, on which are displayed to view highly coloured pictures of door gods, in reds and yellows, blues and purples, for pasting on the doors of the houses. New red lanterns are everywhere in evidence, and toys for the children. Chinese children have very few toys, and those they have are probably bought at the New Year—kites of every size and description,

mud animals covered with fur, tops caught and swung on a string (the original, probably, of "diabolo"), and stuffed tigers—some of which are used not as toys, but as pillows for children who suffer from restless nights—these being attributed to evil spirits, who are said to be afraid of the "king of beasts," as the Chinese call the tiger.

The streets are well paved and well policed with neat little men in semi-Western uniforms of dark blue cloth and German cheese-cutter caps, which look strangely comical over their "queues."

The house in which we are staying is not far from the gates of the Manchu city. In Chentu, as in Peking, there are three cities in one; but the Imperial city is but a shadow of its former self, and the Manchu city looks like a neglected village enclosed in crumbling walls and embowered in trees, amongst which, on roadways overgrown by moss and weeds, stand time-worn houses, inhabited by the descendants of the original Manchu garrison.

For more than two hundred years they have lived "cursed with a patrimony" as pensioners of the Government. It is not a large pension—merely two "taels" a month (about five shillings and sixpence) and their rice; but the slatternly women, untidy children, and lazy-looking men, lounging around to see us pass, show the deteriorating effects of this life. Just lately, however, there have been stormy times in the Manchu city. Fearing disturbances amongst the anti-dynastic societies with which the

country is said to be riddled, the Government have been trying to curry favour with the Chinese by reducing the Manchu pension. Only a few days before our arrival the irate pensioners had risen in rebellion. The Viceroy had been obliged to come in person to make terms with the rioters. He had quieted them with vague promises. The general opinion is, however, that the Government has firmly decided to put a stop to the pension before long, and to compensate by a gift of land. After more than two hundred years of idleness, it seems hardly probable that the Manchus will be able to turn into able agriculturists at a moment's notice. One might just as well expect a pampered Persian cat to leave its saucer of cream and get its own living in the stable. It is not surprising that the Manchu should feel a little hurt. The old Imperial city was even less impressive than the Manchu city. The emperors of olden days would shudder to see the influence of their "tributary vassals," the "Western barbarians," amongst the ruins of former glory. There is little, indeed, of the latter still to be seen—save a grand old gateway, said to be two thousand years old—and a bit of an ancient temple recently restored. A desolate place strewn with boulders, weather-stained and crumbling, is all that remains of the old examination cells. The one or two still left standing reminded me of small fowl-houses, built of stone, damp and dark, and hardly long enough to lie down in. No wonder that some candidates in the old days

went in never to come out again. I have heard of "an average of twenty-five deaths daily" during an examination at Nanking. In those cells students, imprisoned for so many days and nights, had to write their examination essays. In spite of all precautions, cheating was by no means unknown. The essayists would hide their papers up their sleeves, or, by bribing the attendants, smuggle in substitutes to do the work for them. But the old order has changed here, as elsewhere. Side by side with the ruined cells stands the new Government school, built of wood and plaster—new, showy, and unsubstantial. The thin wooden frames to doors and windows are painted a brilliant royal blue, the slender walls are of dazzling white, the buildings—chiefly one story high and built round paved courts—look as fragile as bathing sheds. One asked oneself—how long would they last? And one thought of old China, rigid and unchanging through the centuries, and new China, starting like a growth of mushrooms in the night, breaking out in patches in unexpected places. I retract the word "mushroom." It gives a wrong impression, for Chentu, after all, is marching with the times and doing wonders. It was a wonder in itself to begin with. I remember that Mrs. Bishop, in her travels ten years ago, sang its praises in no unmeasured terms, and finished by saying that it was a city which "owed absolutely nothing to European influence."

The "wood and plaster" school was deserted on

the day of our visit, as the pupils had gone home for the New Year. We were told they consisted of boys who wished to acquire Western languages, with a view to continuing their education in Western lands. In the majority of cases their expenses are defrayed by the Government, which adopts this method of raising up for itself officials trained in Western science.

From the Government school we passed on to a "Beggar School," one of the enterprising reforms of a certain energetic Chentu official. About two hundred beggars were in residence. In one melancholy room long rows of them were waiting apathetically the next turn in their affairs. They looked to be in every stage of dirt and poverty, and some, of ashen hue, stood evidently on the verge of starvation. Our guide informed us that these were some who had only just been brought in from the streets. The other rooms presented a more cheerful appearance. Instruction was being given in trades, such as weaving, glass-polishing, book-sewing, type-cutting, and altogether the place looked well ordered and very fairly clean.

Chentu is an educational centre. There are large industrial schools, with a depôt in the town, where work done by the pupils is offered for sale—silk, brass, lacquer-work, furniture, etc. There are a Normal College, and a school for the sons of merchants and officials from other provinces, a military academy, and, over and above these, the Imperial University, the principal of which is an Englishman. The main street

—or one of the main streets—showed Western influence as much as the schools. The cheap "foreign" shop, alas! was much in evidence, reminding one of certain "shoddy" emporiums at home, in which everything is labelled "sixpence-halfpenny"—and is probably "made in Germany." As a matter of fact, the cheap enamelled ware, coloured glass and sham leather, and mirrors framed in cardboard and tinsel over here in China are usually "made in Japan." "Once burnt, twice shy," the Chinese are beginning to find out that things are not what they seem, and the cheap "foreign" shops will soon cease to thrive. Losing our way in the labyrinth of streets, we finally came to the post office and attempted to buy post cards, but they had none left. The Englishman in charge very kindly sent a postman with us to show us the way back!

The Viceroy of the province paid a formal call on the "foreigners" the other day. He was a spare, elderly man, disfigured by horn-rimmed spectacles and the literary stoop. The only striking thing about him was his magnificent fur coat. His retinue consisted of passive-faced underlings, who stood on either side with the immovability and something the air of Dutch dolls. They wore wadded garments, but were more rotund, however, than Dutch dolls usually are. The interpreter, who had travelled in Western lands, was the only one who considered it unnecessary to banish all life and intelligence from his face.

The last days of the old year are the most strenuous ones of the whole twelve months. Are there twelve or thirteen months this year? I forget—and have no Chinese almanac just now by which to ascertain.

To begin with, provisions for fifteen days must be stored, and a certain amount of cleaning done—and not before it is needed. Then there are the debts to be seen to, and new clothes to be bought or borrowed or got out of pawn, and new mottoes, proverbs, and sayings from the classics on gaily coloured scrolls pasted on the doorposts (those in mourning have these in blue or white, those out of mourning in poppy red). Finally, the "door gods" must be glued upon the doors. These are grotesque portraits of two famous generals of the Tang dynasty. After their death, the Emperor under whom they had served with such distinction fell seriously ill. The story goes that the spirits of the two generals appeared to him in a vision, causing him to recover from his illness. The Emperor, in gratitude, deified them as door gods of his palace, and it was supposed that their presence at the gates would prevent the entrance of evil spirits. Occasionally a more enlightened citizen dispenses with the door gods and has these words inscribed in their place: "Only seek to keep your conscience void of offence, then what need of having door gods?" On New Year's Day everybody goes out calling on everybody else. The visiting cards are hung above the doors, and the doors of those who have many callers are fringed with

A PORTABLE KITCHEN

From Drawings by Native Artists.

NEW YEAR SALUTATIONS

paper; some, on the contrary, have hardly any. There was something pathetic about the isolated card above a lonely doorway, but anyway, people are perfectly straightforward in this matter, and there is no attempt at "bogus cards." The calls, judging from those at which I was present, did not last long. Dressed in their gala clothes, the visitors raised their hands in stately fashion to each occupant of the room, uttered a few polite sentences, smiled effusively—too much so, I thought—and were gone. In the guest-hall tea and cakes were served to all who cared to partake. The one rule in regard to colours in the gorgeous costumes of the girls and the younger women was that they should clash instead of harmonise (or so it seemed to my untrained eye)—trousers of magenta pink, for instance, topped by scarlet upper garments, whilst the "lin tsï," an embroidered band of silk worn over the head, was a mixture of every colour imaginable, in which violet and pale blue predominated. The faces of all who considered themselves becomingly dressed were plastered thickly with powder, and touched up in the most unnatural places with rouge (the tip of the nose and the eyelids being sometimes included).

On the second day of the New Year two women and a child, whom we had never seen before in our lives, came into the room, and after the customary salutations, I talked to the child—an attractive little girl of four or five—whereupon the mother instantly offered to give her to me "for my very

own," and pressed the gift when I laughingly declined.

Feasting is the chief joy of New Year's Day. "Tsan," the kitchen god, becomes an especially important personage at this season of the year. He is credited with an intimate knowledge of everybody's faults and misdeeds. When he makes his annual journey up to heaven, people *smear his lips with sugar* before he goes, in order to induce him to give a good report of their doings. He starts on the first day of the year, and all who can afford to do so, furnish him with paper horses and other necessaries for the journey. On the fourth of the month he returns, and great preparations are made for welcoming him back.

On New Year's Eve everybody sits up to watch the New Year in, in order that their "days may be long in the land." As soon as midnight is over the worship of the ancestral tablets takes place, and homage is paid to that part of the heavens indicated by the almanac as being the quarter from which the "spirit of gladness" is said to emanate. Then they start in with their fifteen Bank Holidays, one on top of the other, and we meanwhile stand outside "pawing" the ground impatiently and longing to be off; but the first difficulty is a servant—there are none to be had at New Year's time, and an attendant of some kind is essential for our next journey, as we shall no longer have friends to depend on and must shift for ourselves. The next requirement is a tailor;

but at New Year's time tailors will not work for love or money. It is the same story throughout. The washer-man, the shoemaker, the furrier, all are holiday-making. The more respectable the shop and the better the business, so much the longer do the shutters remain closed.

Meanwhile, we wait outside and shiver. The weather is cold. They say the coldest part of the winter is always at this season of the year. The wind blows like a snow wind, but it is the rarest thing ever to have snow in Szechuan. One realises, however, it must be warmer than it feels, for there are double daisies blooming in the gardens, and sweet-williams coming into flower. The raw dampness of the air, however, is so penetrating that nobody feels warm, except, perhaps, the Chinese themselves, who are almost twice as large now as they are in the summer, on account of their many layers of wadded and fur-lined garments. They cannot understand why the "Western barbarians" waste so much of their money in coal *which perishes*, instead of investing it in furs—*which last.* The Chinese are past-masters in the art of keeping furs; many of the more wealthy send theirs to the pawnshops for the summer, simply to save themselves trouble. They are returned at the commencement of winter—in excellent condition. I have been trying to buy myself a fur garment for my own wear, as, under the erroneous impression that the Szechuan climate was the same as that of the north of Egypt (the latitude of Chentu being

nearly similar to that of Cairo), I have not brought anything of that kind with me; but once again we are met with the unanswerable argument, "This is the 'Ko Nien' (New Year), no fur shops are open."

In spite of closed shutters and barred doors, the streets are still full of colour. The red lanterns bobbing over doorways, the red scrolls on the door-posts, the gay portraits of the door gods on the doors, the loiterers and passers-by in festive clothing, baby children in scarlet tunics, elder girls in trousers of poppy red, their fathers in sumptuous gowns of purple silk or pale green and golden plush, and the women with knots of artificial flowers of every colour of the rainbow in their black hair. A Chinese woman's hair is always immaculately tidy—rich or poor, it is all the same. The smooth, oiled tresses coiled tightly round have almost the appearance of glossy black satin. They shake their heads over the untidy "curly" locks of the "foreign women," and wonder why they do not use a brush and comb

But to go back to the New Year.

In one of the principal streets we came across a "shadow show." The stage—a rough platform mounted on poles; the actors—marionettes cleverly manipulated by unseen men in the background. Between the stage and the audience there hung a white curtain, which added a charm and mystery to the scene. Thus the shadows of the marionettes were all one could see, and so strangely real did they appear—softened and idealised by the curtain—that one

could almost have imagined them to be real people of a Lilliputian race. Our presence in the crowd had probably been noticed, for after a bit a new marionette appeared on the stage, which, from its pinched waist, hideous hat, and absurd anatomy, suggested the "foreigner" as seen and portrayed by the Chinese. The crowd appeared amused; we could not understand what was being said, and considered it best to move on.

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We had thought of travelling back overland by the north of the province, but our friends strongly dissuaded us from doing this. Had they known a reliable man to send with us, it might be different, but just at this time of the year it seems uncommonly difficult to find anyone at all in the way of a servant. The chair-bearers would probably require most of their money in advance, and perceiving our ignorance of the language, and seeing that we were absolutely at their mercy, might very likely set us down in some lonely place and make off—the Yamen runners following suit. We were reminded of Mrs. Bishop's Yamen runners, who deserted her the moment she was attacked, and afterwards excused themselves by saying, "Of what use were two against two thousand?"

The only alternative that remains is to go back by water, travelling down the River Min till it joins the Yangtse at Sui Fu, and thence on to Ch'ong King.

This journey should take about twelve days, allowing for halts by the way.

Meanwhile we are planning a short overland trip to Kuan Hsien to see the wonderful irrigation works, made something like two hundred years before the Christian era, and to which the plain of Chentu owes its great fertility.

A servant has at last been found. He is still holiday-making, however, and will not be able to come till next week, but has sent a substitute called Lao Cheo—a respectably dressed "country bumpkin," who has never waited on "foreigners" before.

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We must have looked a melancholy little party passing out of the city gate the morning of our start. Two "three-bearer" chairs, a depressed coolie carrying bedding, a couple of Yamen soldiers in scarlet silk jackets and bare feet, and Lao Cheo, with his blue garments tucked up carefully out of the mud, holding a yellow oil-skin umbrella. It was raining piteously, and distinctly cold. Everybody looked miserable—either shivering outside their open-fronted shops over charcoal foot-warmers, or wading dejectedly through the black mud. Most of the pedestrians were bare-footed, some of necessity, others for economical reasons, as it is a pity to spoil boots by wearing them in such bad weather. Our chair-bearers kept shouting to each other "Hua teh hen! hua teh hen!" ("Extremely slippery"). It was a

marvel that they did not go over altogether—and the chairs into the bargain. We were numbed with cold and suggested walking; but Lao Cheo and the soldiers shook their heads. "Tseo puh teh!" ("Walk not attain"!) they said, and they were right. We lunched in a squalid inn, where the best room was a small stable with a bed. Lao Cheo was wishful to help, but horribly puzzled by our strange foods, particularly the tinned things. Finally we presented him with a clean dish-cloth and told him to "wash up." At which he proceeded to wipe round the greasy plates, etc., *with* the dish-cloth, and *minus* water! We explained ourselves more clearly, and Lao Cheo went off in haste, but this time washed, *not* the luncheon things, but the dish-cloth!

That night we stayed at Pi Hsien, and appropriated the guest-rooms. The sitting-room was roofed in, but rather bereft of walls; and, as the night was cold, we retreated into two little bedrooms at the side, surprisingly well furnished with a couple of chairs and a table, to say nothing of the enormous wooden bedsteads, on which Lao Cheo made up the beds, though considerably puzzled by the English sheets and pillows, and not knowing what to do with them.

The Chinese, when they go to bed, roll themselves in their wadded quilts, and look like chrysalises. One thick quilt is amply sufficient, yet here were these "foreigners" with two thick quilts apiece and blanket rugs, and linen sheets, and a couple of pillows.

Truly these "outside Kingdom men" are strange beings!

We ordered "ki tan" (eggs) for supper, and when the eggs were brought I asked for "kan fan" (rice), which is generally to be found in an inn kitchen out here in this rice-growing province. Lao Cheo was some time gone, and finally brought more eggs. We gave up the rice as hopeless. Probably I had made *fan* sound like *tan*, or used a wrong tone of voice.

We had meant to spend the next afternoon at Kuan Hsien, but we had "counted without the rain." For every five steps, it seemed to me, we slipped back one—slithering in the mud. As the day advanced, however, both weather and scenery improved. From the highly cultivated but rather monotonous surroundings of Chentu we passed into the richly wooded plain at the foot of the mountains. Bamboos, cypress trees, a species of myrtle, and willows were growing with almost tropical luxuriance in clumps and groves over a flat stretch of country, which ended suddenly at the foot of steep, mountainous hills, wooded even more thickly than the plain, but wreathed round the summit with freshly fallen snow.

Early in the afternoon we had sent on one of our soldiers with a note to Mr. and Mrs. H. of the China Inland Mission, asking if they would kindly put us up for the night. We fondly hoped he had arrived some time in advance, but it seems he appeared about two minutes before we did. Our friends swallowed their surprise with commendable skill, and from the

welcome they gave us we might have thought we had been expected for weeks. The house was a Chinese house—one-storied buildings round paved courts, and gates leading out of a street lined with memorial arches. There were no stoves, and some of the windows were of paper; but a picturesque brass pan on an "ebony" stand filled with glowing charcoal did excellent duty for a fire in the sitting-room, and was far more artistic than a grate and a mantelpiece.

The next day (in drizzling rain, alas!) we started forth to see the irrigation works. "The magnificent engineering feat achieved by the Chinese in the year 200 B.C.—and achieved by accident." This is supposed to be a quotation, but I object to the words "by accident." Why not say the Chinese invented porcelain, and printing, and gunpowder, and the mariner's compass also by accident? but for these things they are given due credit.

To a certain prefect, Li Ping, and his son is assigned the honour of the work. A river of no great size flowing from the Thibetan mountains is divided into two (called officially the inner and the outer river). The two are subdivided into three, and all along the banks of the three are innumerable Lilliputian canals.

And now for the engineering feat. Leaving the city to the right of us, we made our way along a grass-grown path beneath the trees at the side of a wide, shallow, quickly-flowing river. Fishermen

wading through waist-deep were fishing for trout. The river disappeared round a wooded corner, and we pursued it in its course, not by way of the banks, but through the grounds of a temple on the height of a wooded knoll; but the river had changed its character when next we saw it. The waters had narrowed and deepened, and the colour was like the blue-green of a glacier lake, as it flowed at the foot of a shadowy cleft between rocky precipices a hundred feet deep. Over on the rocks, amongst the trees, stands the Er'wang temple, built in memory of the famous Li Ping and his son; and this river of glorious emerald flowing at the foot of the precipices is not a natural river, after all, but the first of the artificial waterways, and the rocks, one hundred feet high, have been broken through (probably by blasting) as long ago as 200 B.C.! In summer time, when the river is full, the immense flood sweeping through the gorge might cause unspeakable damage, if left to itself. It has, however, been cleverly contrived that the surplus water, in smashing against the rocks, is thrown back with tremendous force into the overflow, which exactly faces the hill that was cut away by Li Ping, and from the overflow it finds its way back to the original bed.

Descending from the temple knoll we pursued our steps along the stony banks of the "emerald river" beyond the cutting, to see the point at which its waters flow from the parent stream. Men were busy repairing the old embankments, which were formed

ARTIFICIAL GORGE, KUAN HSIEN

From Photographs by A. Grainger.

TEMPORARY DAM, KUAN HSIEN

of bamboo baskets, like giant waste-paper baskets, ten feet or more in length, packed tightly with stones large and small. When full, the baskets are placed one on top of the other, until a strong fortification is erected. The cost of keeping up these irrigation works is considerable, and is met in part by taxes levied on the various counties ("hsien") which benefit by the water supply, and in part by the Government. The plain of Chentu measures about two hundred by three hundred "li," * and is watered almost exclusively by the streams which have been made to flow from the river of Kuan Hsien. The labour employed is extensive. The embankments of each waterway are thoroughly repaired every year. In order to do this the water is cut off from each one in turn by means which are as simple as they are efficacious. As we arrived at the junction of the "emerald river" with the old and original river, the barricade by which the water is to be cut off from the former in a few days' time was just in process of completion. Great tripods of wooden staves were firmly fixed in the river bed, and between bamboo mats a strong fortification had been made of the ubiquitous stones, the weight of the whole resting for support on the tripods.

A short walk further up the valley brought us to a famous rope bridge—a quarter of a mile in length, and formed of six strands of stout rope, on the top of which loose planks were strewn crosswise. There

* Three "li" one English mile.

were also rails of rope, and the whole bridge curved in the most graceful fashion, rising where stone supports fixed in the ground kept the ropes up, and dipping downwards between the supports. It swayed considerably, but was evidently immensely strong; sedan-chairs, coolies bearing heavy burdens, buffaloes, pigs, and a never-ceasing stream of people pass and re-pass all day long. We completed our Kuan Hsien excursion by a visit to Li Ping's gorgeous temple, one of the finest in the whole of China.

We climbed the hill to the golden gates—gates that are one glittering mass of gilded carving—and passed up long flights of wide steps to one courtyard after another. The whole place was beautifully kept. There was an air of prosperity and dignity very unusual in Taoist temples; the polished lacquer columns, the dazzle of gold and colour, the carving, and the fretwork, all played a part in the scheme of beauty. We were pointed out Li Ping's motto inscribed in gilt characters: "Dig the channels deep, keep the banks low." We passed up flight after flight, through court into court, and still had only seen one-half of the temple buildings. Here and there green and leafy gardens hovered in stray nooks, where, in spite of the inclement weather, primulas and camellias were in full flower. We were taken to a pond of "sacred" turtles hiding under rocks wreathed in drooping maidenhair—and we stood under a sacred tree—a myrtle said to be nearly four

hundred years old—around which incense sticks were burning steadily.

The next day, fortunately, the rain held off; we had slept the night at Chang Lin Pu, and started off at five the next morning, hoping to get to Chentu before the closing of the city gates. The Chentu gatekeepers have a method of their own. At dusk a small candle is lighted by way of warning, and the moment the candle burns itself out the gates are flung to, and may only be opened after that in extreme cases of life and death.

To-day, the sixteenth of the second month, or the fifteenth of the first (according to Chinese reckoning), is the last day of the New Year holidays, and celebrated in many parts of China by the "Lantern Festival"; but in Chentu—this "advanced" Western metropolis—the officials have put a stop to the procession altogether as being a frequent cause of fire. It seemed to me, however, that most of the citizens had gone out that evening, just as we had, for the purpose of discovering if there were anything to be seen; but besides the dense crowd, the only unusual episode was the appearance on the scene of the "hsien" official with his military escort: they were dashing down the street with the fury of a London fire-engine. The crowd fell back in haste to let them pass. Who, I wonder, would care to be a "hsien" official? Like the fire-engine, he has to be always ready, day and night, to go to any part of the city where his presence may be needed. If there are

disturbances in the streets, it is he who will be held to blame!

February 17th.

To-day Deborah and I start off on our journey down the Min, but instead of finding our new servant on the scene awaiting our commands, the principal of the University has appeared, and has come to warn us that this excellent servant who has been engaged is an excellent servant of his own. He asked leave a day or so ago to go to his home to "bury his father." His master's suspicions were aroused, and this morning he discovered that the funeral in question was nothing more nor less than a journey down the river with two foreign ladies—the reason for this crooked behaviour being twofold. The servant was desirous of leaving his old situation, as he did not get on well with his fellow-servants, and by obtaining a post as "ta-si-fu" * to the foreign ladies, he would succeed in bettering his position, and would henceforth be able to command the higher wage of a cook instead of that of "second boy," his present position. According to Chinese etiquette, he could not have given notice in the usual way, as that would have meant "losing face." The "burying of the dead" seems a time-honoured excuse in China. Hence a Chinese explaining the words, "Let the dead bury their dead," said it was

* Cook.

evident that Christ knew there were no dead to bury, and that the people were making idle excuses.

We feared our journey would have to be postponed once again, but in less than an hour another servant was produced—Lao Tsong—a queer, wizened little man with a sharp face and eyes like a ferret's.

He was an excellent cook, they said, but had one great failing, which had cost him one situation after another—namely, a highly developed capacity for "squeezing" and over-"squeezing," recognising no limit to "squeezing" so long as he himself was not "squeezed." *

However, on the boat, our friends suggest, his purchases will be of the most limited order, and he will not get much opportunity for exercising his particular weakness.

By the way, to ensure good health for the coming year we should have taken a stroll to-day on the city walls. All the world and his wife were there—crowds of them—coming and going. The "Hundred Disease Stroll," they call it, and the sixteenth of the first month is its day.

We start on our boat journey this afternoon—the boat a small Wu Pan with an arched roof of matting, under which Deborah and I are to live for twelve days. The rest of the party consists of Lao Tsong, the ferret, a couple of ragged, miserable-looking Yamen runners (probably beggars to whom

* "Squeeze"—make an illicit profit out of every transaction in which he is concerned. *China in Decay*.

this job has been sweated out), and a small crew of four men, including the captain. Lao Tsong looks to have all his wits about him. The only trouble is he may turn out to be a bit too clever.

I will post this before we leave. It will be carried overland to Wanhsien, I expect, and get there long before we shall.

Yours,

V.

On the River Min,
February, 1908.

Here we are, two thousand miles in the interior of China on a river that is running dry. For hours upon hours the crew have been pushing and pulling us through the mud and the stones. Now and again our boat is literally carried, not on the water, of which but a few cupfuls remain, but on the shoulders of the men. None but Chinese—plodding, persevering, patient Chinese—would think it worth while to attempt a river journey under such baffling circumstances.

Various methods were resorted to in order to lighten our weight. The two shabby Yamen soldiers were put on shore to walk, and late in the evening, just as Deborah and I were thinking of turning in, a request came for our boxes. We were loth to let them go, fearing we might never see them again, but Lao Tsong assured us it would be all right. They were to be shipped on to another junk, and we should have them in the morning. The boxes having gone, they proceeded to remove the planks from the bottom of the boat, the cooking utensils, the men's bedding, even our servant. It was getting late, but apparently no one meant to go to bed that night except Deborah

and myself. We subsided at last on to our primitive couches, wadded quilts on palm-leaf mattresses spread out on the floor, and fell asleep to the loud grating noise of the boat being dragged through the mud and over the stones, whilst the men shouted instructions one to the other.

We must have progressed considerably in the night.

The next morning, mercifully, the river was deep enough for the boat to float. Now and then a stretch of rapid water carried us on at a tremendous pace. By the end of the week we hope to be in Kiating. Meanwhile Lao Tsong, the "weasel," turns us out elegant repasts, in spite of the fact that we have furnished him with no cooking utensils whatever, except a kettle and an egg saucepan, and the simplest of provisions. They say the Chinese are born cooks, and equal to the French; but they surpass the French in the skill with which they succeed in making "bricks without straw," and turn out a dainty dish with ingredients which a French "chef" would probably consign to the pig-tub. The captain's "ko," a kind of metal cauldron over a charcoal stove, was Lao Tsong's kitchener, and by dint of cooking a large number of his dishes in basins by means of steam, placing one on top of the other, he contrived to turn out a meal of several courses—soup, vegetables, sauces, chicken, beef, and sweets.

He never missed an opportunity of going on shore to do some marketing, and in the evening would come

humbly forward and request me to "suan chang" (make up accounts). We thought of his "squeezing" propensities as he ran over the list of things purchased—charcoal (2½d.), cloves (half a farthing), pepper (¼d.), sugar (1½d.), vegetables (¾d.), oranges (1d.), dish-cloths (½d.), etc., etc.; but the sum total came to so small an amount, from a Western point of view, that it was only by the twinkle in the ferret eyes that one guessed that the able Lao Tsong was adding another small feather to his private nest.

At Kiating we spent a couple of days with old Chefoo acquaintances at the China Inland Mission. Kiating had just awakened from its "New Year's" sleep, and the streets were gaily coloured pictures framed in mist, narrow pavements festooned with red lanterns climbing slowly uphill under elaborately carved and richly ornamented memorial arches.

We spent a morning amongst the silk and fur shops with our host, and after long hours I effected my wished-for purchase of a fur-lined robe. It was a lengthy business, and in every shop the same scene was enacted. First the wished-for garments had to be unearthed from some back store-house. Looking them over, we detected the greasy stain of a pig-tail down the centre of the back, and we remarked that these garments were evidently not new. The furriers, however, smilingly asserted that they were perfectly new, and the stain was of no consequence. The bargaining was conducted in so friendly a spirit

that one might have thought some big joke was going on by the smiles and laughter on the part of all concerned. Finally, four or five furriers were asked to send up their respective furs to the foreigner's house for further inspection in the course of the afternoon. It was a significant fact that they all came in turn one after the other without ever colliding, and also that all the garments brought were distinctly second-hand, and the one new one never appeared at all.

The plan out here seems to be to try and get rid of the rubbish first. We won the day, however, in the long run, thanks to mine host and an ex-Chinese merchant called in to assist. The "new" coat (probably even that was not absolutely new) was bought for about five pounds, the furrier protesting angrily at the very end that he did not want to sell. I suppose that is all part of the "contraryism" of things out here—to look angry when you are pleased, and vice versa.

We passed a group of Thibetans in the street—huge, wild-looking men with rough, black hair in thick, curling masses and odoriferous clothing of sheep and yak-skin, which had long ceased to be white. One (a priest), in dingy scarlet, was buying devotional trophies in a brass shop, and they were probably all of them on their way to the sacred mountain Omei Shan, thirty miles distant, and looked peaceable enough; but our friends told us they could soon be roused to fury, and that one day a Thibetan, armed with a sword and seeing a passer-by looking at him

with amused interest, whipped out his weapon and would have slashed out at the spectators had they not beaten a hasty retreat.

Kiating is a typical city of Szechuan—flung down between two rivers and wrapped in mist; but even now in this damp, cold atmosphere beautiful flowers are blooming in the gardens—tawny red orchids, crimson hellebores and camellias in rich clusters of colour under leafy palms, and giant teak trees which tower against the sky.

The various mission schools are just recommencing work after the New Year's holidays. These seem to be the only well-attended places of education in the city at the present time.

A year or two ago, in the sudden craze for "Western learning," the Government made supreme efforts to start Government schools. Large sums of money were expended in the erection of buildings, and such was the general enthusiasm that pupils flocked in numbers to avail themselves of the advantages offered, but, alas! the advantages were only *offered*, not *given*. Properly qualified teachers seemed almost unobtainable. The "professors" engaged did little more than "profess," and it turned out sometimes that the scholars knew more than their teachers. Parents naturally resented paying school fees to no purpose, and the pupils this year seem to have dwindled down almost, if not quite, to vanishing point.

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We came in the mist and left in the mist, and during our three days at Kiating never saw a sign of any hill or mountain of any description, though Mount Omei is less than thirty miles off and ten thousand feet high. As we swept down river on the swift current we passed a trio of house-boats carrying a party of Canadian missionaries who had been ten weeks toiling up thus far from Ichang!

One of the most picturesque bits of the river lies just below Kiating. The glass-green water flows under the shadow of brick-red rocks strangely ridged and carved by time and flood, festooned with foliage and wreathed with drooping maidenhair. Here and there on rough ledges idols have been placed, which look down at their own faces in the clear water below.

After a while the sun breaks through the haze. We are speeding down the widening river, which gives forth again as clearly as a mirror the picture that has burst into view of the red-tinted hills, splashed from base to summit with shadowy trees, and the summer sky above. Away to the west of us range above range of mountains, shading from the palest grey-blue to the most delicate opalescent hues and the softest rose-tinted violet, give token of the splendours of that land which lies between us and Thibet, and which hitherto has been veiled from sight by the vast and impenetrable curtain of mist.

Now and again the boat bounces like an india-

rubber ball as it plunges down the boiling eddies of a rapid.

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Another day on shore—this time at Sui Fu. The river of golden sand (hereafter called the Yangtse) and the Min join forces at this point. The city of Sui Fu, huddled together on the tops of steep banks of sand, looks down on a vast stretch of water, watched over by veiled mountains.

An old acquaintance of Chentu, Mr. F., of the China Inland Mission, took us for an interesting ramble through the streets, and we passed from things gay to things sorrowful. But the shops were fascinating. Silver-ware, which appears to be a speciality of Sui Fu, is sold by weight, an ounce for an ounce, and a very little added to the price for the workmanship. We watched men making the "Kingfisher" ornaments, covering by some ingenious method silver trinkets with the gorgeous blue tips of a kingfisher's feathers. When finished, they have all the appearance of delicate enamel-work.

We purchased some horn boxes and opium cups, and artificial flowers like the girls and women wear in their hair ; and this being the first month of the year, all parcels were wrapped in bright red paper ! The copper shops and the silk shops (silks sold by the skein, another speciality of Sui Fu) attracted us not a little, and we stopped with interest to look at the famous insect wax which was being offered for sale

in great rounded slabs, like wooden bread platters in size and shape, but made of the whitest of white wax.

The white wax insect has a curious history. Two hundred miles from Kiating, in the valley of Chien Chang, there are trees, a kind of privet they say, which are covered with brown scales full of these useful creatures.

Every April thousands of porters are sent from Kiating to bring as many scales as they can carry to hang on the "white wax" trees, which exist in large numbers in the neighbourhood of Kiating. The porters, with their precious burdens, only travel at night, as the heat of the sun might damage their freight. After one hundred days suspended on the Kiating trees, the insects have excreted the white wax in such quantities that the branches present the appearance of being covered with snow. These same branches are lopped off, and the "snow" removed and placed in iron pots of boiling water. When melted, the wax is skimmed and sold in the round moulds which we saw at Sui Fu.

Year after year the same performance goes on. The creatures come into being in the Chien Chang valley, and are brought to Kiating to make their wax.

In the midst of the shops we came to the meeting of four cross-roads. This was the execution ground, right in the thickest part of the city, and last year it

PAGODA AND VILLAGE ON THE YANGTSE

seems there were no less than three hundred executions on this very spot. There is a strange custom in some parts of China which permits a condemned criminal to take possession of anything that he pleases from the shops along the road by which he is conducted to the place of execution! His movements are somewhat impeded by the chain that is hung about his neck and round his arms, but not sufficiently so to prevent him from making use of his privilege if he so desires.

The "Fu Yamen" (official residence of the highest mandarin of the city) seemed a fitting sequel to the execution ground. We mingled with the eager crowd of spectators and looked across the empty courtyard dividing us and them from the hall of judgment, in which we could see the Fu himself sitting in state on the judgment seat, whilst an abject, shrivelled figure knelt on the ground in front. Yamen soldiers in their bright scarlet uniforms were in attendance, and others whom we could not see distinctly.

The case was a serious one. Fourteen men had been convicted of having put to death an entire family in order to rob them of their wealth. In the course of their trial they accused the three elders of the village of having incited them to do the deed. The "hsien" magistrate, who usually tries these cases, had passed it on to the Fu magistrate. If the Fu also failed, it would be passed on again to the Viceroy of the province, but the Fu, on his

mettle, was determined to succeed. The trial of the fourteen men was over. They were condemned to death, and were probably half dead already from the tortures to which they had been subjected in order to make them confess. The conviction or acquittal of the elders was the matter at present in hand. Supposing them to be innocent, it would cost them a fortune to prove the fact, and rumour goes that they will probably end by forfeiting their lives from confessions, true *or otherwise*, wrung from them by torture.

These sons of the "Celestial Land" seem to live on a kind of volcano. We passed on to another tragedy of a different nature, and entering a building in ornamental grounds, which used to be a temple and is now the club-house of the most influential commercial guild of the city, we came upon a festive crowd and extensive preparations for a grand feast. Groups of richly dressed men in silk and fur stood around in the front hall, where the God of Literature and the Emperor's Ancestral Tablet were enshrined.

It was explained to us that these gorgeous "butterflies" were the "friends" of one of the principal bankers of the town who had recently gone bankrupt! His ruin had been brought about by the merciless spite of an enemy who had started false reports and induced a sudden "run" on the bank, which the banker was unable to meet. His "friends" had undertaken to see if anything could

be saved for the creditors, and the grand feast in preparation in the back premises must be paid for by the ruined banker in acknowledgment of their services!

From bankers we turned our attention to the barbers, many of whom, like London shoe-blacks, ply their trade out in the open. A barber in China will not only shave his customer, but give him a course of massage if he so desires. The forty "cash" for a shave (a little less than a penny) will include a cleansing of the eyes and ears. The latter undergo a kind of scraping, and the former are treated equally drastically, the eyelids turned up and rubbed with a small implement that has a projection the size of a pea at the end of it. Although it often causes inflammation, the idea that this treatment is necessary to their well-being is firmly rooted in the mind of the Chinese.

Sui Fu seems to have distinguished itself in the anti-foot-binding crusade owing to the example of one of the mandarins who worked hard in the cause, writing pamphlets on the subject and leaving no stone unturned to bring about reforms. The upper and middle classes in the city have, with very few exceptions, given up the revolting custom, and only quite the lowest amongst the people still cling to it, probably from the dread that daughters with unbound feet might be looked upon as slave-girls.

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To-day has been a gala day. That "queer thing in the sky," as the Ch'ong King child called it, has been shining from morn till eve. We drifted along in the shimmering light, down the wide, smooth river between low hills dotted with dark trees, and bright with the golden yellow flower of the "Iu Tsai."

We lingered for a few sleepy hours outside the picturesque town of Lucheo, watching the varied blues and greens of the market on the sandy shore, where eager groups of men in blue cotton gowns bargained for vegetables and sugar-cane.

A neighbouring boatman begged me to take a photo of his boat, and looked sadly disappointed and rather incredulous when I said I had taken it and had nothing to show.

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Sunday—in the rain and the mist again; but we have had a pleasant day, nevertheless, at the mission station of Kiang Tsin, and a not uninteresting walk through the ancient graveyards on the hill at the back of the town. We were pointed out gravestones consisting of a stone slab, with a worn tablet in the centre, over two hundred and fifty years old, dating from the last dynasty, and more picturesque than these—terraced graves in which the oblong stone recesses of the coffins were built in rows one above the other, and the whole erection covered with earth, but the earth had worn away

EMBANKMENT OF BAMBOO BASKETS

with the years, and even the coffins had turned to dust. There were others, the outer walls of which had crumbled away altogether, displaying to view little suites of tiny stone chambers in which nothing but a bone or two remained, and where apparently occasional beggars lived and had their being. In this land of demon-worship I am told that there are men who go out and live amongst the graves for months at a time in communion with evil spirits!

Kiang Tsin is not progressive like Sui Fu. A few years ago an attempt was made to do away with foot-binding, but lately it has come into fashion again with renewed force. As to opium-smoking, the drug having grown too expensive for any but the wealthy to smoke, the poorer folk have taken to eating it instead. When *eaten*, a lesser quantity is sufficient, but the effects are said to be far more deleterious.

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We hoped to get to Ch'ong King to-day, but the wind was blowing a gale—the men could make no headway. "Tseo puh teh!" they said ("Go not attain!"), and curled up and went to sleep.

Later on in the day, by a supreme effort the boat was got across the river and moored in a sheltered cove below a small country town—a town of crowded houses on the top of a sandy ridge crowned by a temple amongst banyan trees, and looking down on

to the sandy shore strewn with timber new and old, where boat-building was in progress.

Deborah and I ventured forth with Lao Tsong in attendance. As we mounted the long flights of steps leading to the streets we could see from every point of vantage above our heads motionless groups of men and women standing as though petrified, staring like puzzled cows at this curious apparition in their midst of two foreigners dropped from the skies. As we advanced we perceived messengers despatched in every direction to announce our coming. As we passed they fell in behind us, masses of them. It was like some vast army tramping through the streets of a deserted city, for every door was barred, every shutter closed.

Lao Tsong explained that they were still celebrating the New Year's holiday. Yet four weeks have gone by since New Year's Day!

"Familiarity breeds contempt." And the crowd answered banteringly, while Lao Tsong tried to keep order in the front ranks. It seemed best to beat a dignified retreat, so, taking the first road that led riverwards, we went back to our boat. Looking up from the shore, the whole length of the steep street, to the highest point visible between the houses, was one slowly moving mass of human beings following in our wake. They gathered in dense crowds round the boat. We shut the doors at either end of the arched tunnel of matting which roofed over our beds and boxes, and sat down on our palm-leaf mattresses

in the dark. A loud knocking called Lao Tsong to the rescue, and behold a deputation of women who had come to " shuah " (have a chat).

They had never seen a foreigner before, they said, and eagerly the spokeswoman of the party seized my hand, remarked on the colour of my skin, felt the thickness of my sleeve, and enquired if my rings were made of gold. Lao Tsong was very diplomatic. He answered all questions gently and politely, and ushered the would-be callers back to the shore, where a dense crowd of men, like baffled hounds, stood and gazed with straining, eager eyes.

It was a relief when the darkness came and sent them back to their homes. There had been " words " between the boatmen and some of the more restive spectators, and one feared the words might end in blows or stone-throwing.

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Once again we are at Ch'ong King, and we arrived just in time to be present at a Chinese wedding. You would have been amused could you have seen the invitation. A sheet of scarlet paper in a long scarlet and gold envelope. We were told we should answer it either by sending a present or taking one with us to the ceremony.

Wedding guests usually bring money, either cash or silver; the latter is placed on a table just inside the door, and the former flung down in a corner on the floor. No one goes empty-handed

to a wedding feast. At many feasts the guests practically pay in full for all that they eat and drink!

Tsin Li Lien's wedding was held in the Mission compound, as both she and the bridegroom are especial protegés of our friends here. To the hum of voices and the sound of nasal music, the bridal chair, covered with embroidered scarlet silk, was carried in at the gates, and in due course the curtain in front was raised and the bride, a cowed and clumsy figure in magenta-pink garments of wadded silk touched up with scarlet, stepped forth, looking dazed and stupefied. But this was quite as it should be. Unless a Chinese bride appears absolutely miserable and dejected she is thought to be unmaidenly and ill-bred. Her head, moreover, was weighed down by a species of high crown of red and blue and tinsel, ending in a heavy fringe, which dangled forlornly in front of her face, hidden already by a silk veil. No wonder she tottered awkwardly into the church, as she was practically blindfolded.

An elderly female relative acted as mistress of the ceremonies and piloted her along till she was finally placed by the side of the bridegroom. He was a short, spare man, with a pinched face, large lips, and a massive forehead, and the appearance of his wedding garments, of some dark-hued silk, was entirely spoilt by a number of scarlet sashes wound round his chest and back, and tied in huge, clumsy bows below the shoulders. These sashes are a sign of popularity—

From a Photograph by A. H. Broomhall.

BRIDAL PAIR AT CHONG KING WEDDING

the more friends you have, the more sashes you are supposed to wear.

Instead of the ring ceremony a native custom was adhered to, and a small glass of wine handed first to the bridegroom, who put it to his lips, and secondly to the elderly relative, who made a feint of putting it to the bride's lips also. The performance was gone through again, only the other way about, first the bride and then the bridegroom. The marriage service over, the "happy pair" walked miserably out of the church, and now, for the first time in their lives (nominally if not in reality), they saw each other face to face, but only for a minute or so.

Two more ceremonies had still to be gone through. In an adjoining room, seated side by side at a table planked against the scroll-decorated wall, and with their backs to the assembled company, the bride and bridegroom sat disconsolately before basins of syrup in which boiled eggs peeled of their shells floated uninvitingly. The bride's veil had been removed. She sat with downcast head, looking at the eggs, which she was evidently not expected to eat, whilst the elderly female relative touched the bridegroom on the shoulder and urged him to make haste. He thereupon seized his chop-sticks, and placing one of his eggs in a third basin, which he handed to his monitor, he hastily swallowed down the remaining two, sprang up, saluted the guests, and departed. But his duties were not yet over.

A few minutes later the forlorn pair were standing

side by side in the room in which the egg rite had been performed, with their backs to the company and their faces towards the wall. The master of the ceremonies called each guest by name, and each in turn stepped in, and standing where the bride and bridegroom could see them, saluted in Chinese fashion. The bridegroom returned the salute; the bride studied the ground with eyes cast down in sorrow and humility.

Then, after a prolonged interval, we were invited to the feast; the men sat in one guest-hall, and all the rest of us in the other, seated at round tables scattered about the room. The centre of each table was spread with Lilliputian dishes, fifteen or sixteen in number, filled with dainties of various kinds, such as eggs that were some years old, pale green in colour and rather nice, fishes' fins and preserved gristle, native dates and sliced oranges, and a certain "hair vegetable," a great delicacy, said to be a species of seaweed, but akin to wet black hair in texture!

The sweets and nuts came first in orthodox Chinese fashion; then course followed course, each dish more substantial than the rest. The meat and herb dumplings had a suet crust, dabbed in the centre with bright red, the wedding colour. The chicken stew was palatable, but the sea slugs which followed were so large and white and slimy that my jaws grew stiff at the thought of them.

Half-way through, a basin of hot water was handed round, in which we all rinsed our porcelain spoons,

preparatory to helping ourselves to a dish of lotus seeds, about the size of small poppy heads, floating in sweet syrup. After the lotus seeds everybody began again with fresh vigour. Refuse was swept off the table on to the floor, and the table was littered afresh with greasy odds and ends, basins of rice were handed round, pork and baked fish, bamboo shoots and peas in their pods, and finally lumps of pork fried in sugar, held in great esteem by our companions.

I had marvelled once or twice at the rapidity with which they demolished whole dishes before I was half-way through the contents of my porcelain spoon, but I had forgotten the cardboard boxes. They were given round to the whole party, and our friends, I perceived, had packed theirs so full that it was all they could do to get in a chunk or two of the sugared pork.

Evidently by now they were "chih pao liao" (had eaten enough), and, "folding their tents like the Arabs, they silently stole away." Another point of contrast between their customs and our own. Out here in China conversation takes place before the meal, not after, and as soon as you have had as much as you want, and the dinner is at an end, you get up and go!

. . . The "New Year" has left its traces behind it. Up on the Ch'ong King Parade Ground on a fine afternoon people are still holiday-making. The little girls have their shuttlecocks, fanciful editions of Western shuttlecocks, tipped by a few brown feathers,

which curl over gracefully. No battledore is required; the small maiden, with wonderful ingenuity, hits the shuttlecock with the side of her little foot—and a bound, hoof-like foot seems as serviceable as any other. The boys have kites, and the adults have kites, and fly them with admirable skill.

The kites are of every shape and form, from those as big as a man to small ones made like butterflies. It is amusing to watch a dignified paterfamilias launching his toy from the top of the city wall, handling it carefully, until finally it soars aloft and drifts like a great crimson bird over the grave-strewn cemetery.

A kind of Chinese "Tom Tiddler's Ground" seems to be in vogue amongst the boys, but the Chinese "Tom Tiddler" spreads himself out flat on the grass and tries to trip up trespassers with his feet.

We, too, have been holiday-making, picnicking on the top of the hills on the other side of the river. It was interesting to see Ch'ong King from another point of view, the tangled mass of curved roofs and weather-beaten walls climbing the steep hillside—standing on tip-toe, as it were, leaning over each other to look down on to the swiftly flowing waters of the great river. From afar off, veiled in golden haze, the black mud of the narrow footways, the dripping steps frequented by the never-ceasing trail of water-carriers, the corners heaped high with odoriferous garbage, the dismal squalor of the badly lit, mud-floored houses were all invisible.

We ourselves were ascending a steep mountain path, up, and still further up, into the glorious hill country, where broad stretches of sunlight crept out from shadowy bamboo groves and tracts of golden crops ("tsai iu"), and terraced water-fields climbed with us to the heights where the pine-woods reigned supreme, and the air was full of the scent of pines and the silence of the woods.

With the magic of a fairy tale we came suddenly on a tiny house with wide verandahs and doors open to receive us. This was the C.I.M. bungalow, where for a couple of months every year in the great heat of the summer the tired workers from the city can flee for shelter, and judging by accounts, it makes all the difference between health and sickness in their ranks. One realises a little what that heat must be in July and August. This is only the 16th March, and the sun shining through the haze is delightfully warm. We lunched out in the open as though it had been the middle of summer. Azaleas were coming into flower, and scarlet geraniums were out in blossom.

The heat is considered more trying in Ch'ong King than in many other towns in this part owing to the fact that the city is built on a rock. Many of the streets are merely steps in the rock, worn smooth by the feet of many generations.

We had many amusing excursions amongst the shops of Ch'ong King with Lao Tsong in attendance. It was worth the expenditure of a few cents to hear the "weasel" bargain. After deciding on our pur-

chases we would turn to Lao Tsong and put the matter into his able hands. With an air of indifference Lao Tsong enquired the price. The salesman, with great promptitude, named a sum. Lao Tsong's face expressed untold scorn. His scorn was too great for words. He merely curled his nostrils and showed his teeth in an ironical " canine " smile. The salesman, with less assurance of manner, repeated his words.

Lao Tsong advanced a step and let forth a volume of indignant protest, finishing by offering a sum about a quarter as much as that asked.

The salesman smiled sweetly, perhaps a trifle soapily, and said, " Mai puh tao " (" Sell not arrive ").

The purchase in question was a length of blue cotton cloth, in quantity about eleven feet. Lao Tsong made an audible calculation as to how much it should cost per foot. The salesman looked dreamily in the air and did a little arithmetic on his own account. Smilingly he lowered his price by an infinitesimal amount. Smilingly Lao Tsong raised his offer correspondingly; the crowd of onlookers pressing round the door and blocking the street gave advice which no one listened to.

" Mai puh tao," said the salesman again, and packed up the things.

Lao Tsong yielded still more.

The salesman give in a few cents also.

At this point an appropriate jest may do much towards effecting a compromise. When everybody

laughed, Lao Tsong made another offer, and the salesman gave in once more. They went over the same performance again and yet again, when suddenly the salesman broke off with—

"Mai teh! mai teh!" ("Buy attain!") in the tone of one who would say, "All right! all right! Why all this fuss?"

The money was counted out, the loose cash given in change threaded on a string, and without any parting civilities we walked out of the shop, having spent over a quarter of an hour making a purchase the price of which was something under a shilling.

Possibly all the time the proprietor of the shop, arrayed in handsome silk garments, was sitting near by, smoking his water-pipe, with his teapot close beside him, saying not a word, but looking on with much interest.

Once again we are preparing for a boat journey. A small boat with an arched roof of matting has been hired to take us as far as Ichang. The invaluable Lao Tsong will go, too, and a crew of eight men, including the captain.

Our kind friends here have arranged everything for us. We feel we are travelling royally, with all worry and trouble taken off our shoulders, and even our arithmetic made easy, and we sit by with admiration whilst the difference is worked out between Shanghai dollars and Szechuan dollars,* and Ch'ong

* In China at the present time there are nineteen different kinds of dollars!

King "taels" are changed into Ch'ong King dollars, and the silver shoes weighed and valued, and strings of copper "cash," which look like huge brown snakes made of copper, are supplied for emergencies. Lao Tsong carries the copper, and wears it slung round his neck like a necklace.

. . . . . .

We started from Ch'ong King on the 17th March. Our crew seemed to think we were in no hurry, and the weather was bad. Three days after our start, however, the sun burst through the mist, turning the water into spangled silver, and robing the mountains in mauve and pale amethyst and opalescent blue. They were mirrored again in the river, the same colours, only fainter, and above the sands and the rocks along the broken shore the fields were green with the spring crops, and sprinkled with the golden buttercup blossoms of the oil plant.

We came to a village grouped around the base of a great rock, which stood like a giant's castle high above the houses and the trees. From base to summit a wonderful temple with curved roofs, tier above tier, was, as it were, glued to the face of the cliff, the rock itself forming the back wall of the temple. And this, we remembered, was the famous "Shih Pao Miao," which was hidden in the mist on our journey up.

We landed and climbed the long flights of steps to the gates, unfortunately rousing the sleeping

SHÏ PAO TEMPLE ON THE YANGTSE

WU-PAN ON THE YANGTSE

beggars to activity. On our return they barred the way, stretching out leprous hands for alms. We had to pay toll, a copper "cash" to each, before we could pass. Woe betide the traveller who gives more than that to a Chinese beggar! Mounting the eight flights of wooden stairs, we found ourselves in the main buildings of the temple, on the top of the rock.

The walls of the first great hall were lined with gilded gods under mouldy canopies. The Goddess of Sight, to whom all who suffer with their eyes go for help, held in her hand a large painted wooden eye of hideous form. We passed by the twelve Buddhist hells—small "chambers of horror," in which life-sized models of judges presided over courts where the spirits of the dead (represented also by wooden models, but of dwarf stature) were being subjected by horrible avenging demons to tortures indescribable.

At the end of the courtyard a smiling priest offered us tea and asked us to write our names in a book, chiefly full of Chinese signatures. He conducted us through to a room at the back, in which, so the story goes, in years gone by a miraculous supply of rice was discovered day by day in a mysterious hole. The monks received the gifts the gods had sent with all gratitude for a time, but at length, in an evil day, the feeling of curiosity grew too strong for them. They set to work to discover the secret of the mystery, and lo! the supply of rice stopped from that day forth for evermore!

Our priest told the tale in all good faith, and we looked with interest at the hole in the floor. It was about the size of a bread platter in diameter, and one could not tell how deep. We wondered what its original purpose could have been. It was much smaller, so the priest told us, long ago!

Sunday we spent at Wanhsien. It was a sunny day again for a wonder, and the tangled streets climbing the hillside seemed more crowded than ever, the houses pressing forward over the narrow alley-ways. Flapping scrolls, banners, and lanterns shut out all the sunlight and most of the sky. The beggars, covered in sores and horribly emaciated, ragged and filthily dirty, hovered round like wounded birds of prey.

After the halt at Wanhsien came our spin down the rapids. We looked forward to them with impatience, held our breath with suspense as we plunged into the boiling cauldron, gasped as we slipped down with the sliding torrent, and thrilled with excitement as we bounded safely through the foam into smooth water. The gorges, though grand and wild and rather awful, had lost the beauty of the autumn foliage and were weeping in the rain. The weather had turned dismal again, and the only exciting moments of the day were spent in shooting the rapids.

At the famous Chin Tan, however, Lao Tsong explained lugubriously that we should get drenched through if we stayed on the boat. He proceeded to cover boxes and beds with oil sheeting, and the crew

shook their heads when asked if there were danger ahead. Opinions seemed unanimous that we should go on shore and leave the boat and the crew to face the rapid alone.

From our vantage point on the top we watched the tiny boat (it looked so small amongst the tumbling waves) and saw it dive into the torrent. Three times it dipped its "head" under the water like a bird, rose again with a bound, and finally shot like an arrow from the boiling foam and was swept on by the current.

We walked for hours before we came up with it again. Our boatmen were wreathed in smiles, the "ta shui" (rough water) had not been half as bad as they expected; they had got a little wet, that was all, and we might just as well have stayed on board.

On Thursday we found ourselves back at Ichang, in a changed world, and here we are still travelling on the Yangtse, still journeying by boat; but the boat is an English steamer smelling of Aspinall's enamel, and the river is shorn of its gorges and its amethyst mountains, and is melting away more and more into mud. We have come back to the study in sepia!

On board there are two young men whom I first mistook for Japanese. They turned out to be Chinese engineers, who are going to Hankow, or rather Hanyang, to buy rails for the proposed line to Szechuan. We have heard a good deal about this railway; it is by far the most expensive thing of the kind contem-

plated in China, and at present hangs fire for want of funds. Our young engineers very naturally took an optimistic view of its future, but I believe there is only money enough at present to construct a few hundred yards.

. . . . . .

Yours ever,

V.

GANKIN,
March, 1908.

One more glimpse of a Chinese town before we leave the Yangtse, and though Gankin is many hundreds of miles nearer the coast than Ichang, it seemed to me, as we landed in the darkness of the night into a howling crowd of excited Chinese on a river-side wharf, that we had leapt back with a bound into the far interior. We had asked to be allowed to stay at the China Inland Mission Station, but it was some time before our repeated requests for sedan-chairs took effect, the trouble being that the city gates would be closed before the chair-bearers could get back again to their houses. At last some were forthcoming, and we were borne through the riverside suburb into a deserted city of black alley-ways and windowless buildings, where "the very houses seemed asleep."

The police on the wharf looked on us with a good deal of suspicion. It was explained afterwards that the place was full of revolutionaries, and ever since the assassination of the Governor of the province less than a year ago by one of their number (a Gankin student), the authorities had been especially suspicious of new arrivals.

Those had been stirring times in the city. On the day of his assassination the Governor was attending some function at a Government school. The student gave himself up, and made no secret of his intention. He was in due course beheaded, and his heart taken out and offered as a sacrifice to the dead body of his victim. According to law the heart should have been extracted *before* the execution, instead of after, and the man held responsible for this omission was severely punished! An insurrection in the town was quelled with some difficulty. The shots whizzed over the Mission compound where we are now staying, and for an hour or two it was hard to tell which way things would go.

We were at Gankin for the Ching Ming Festival (Festival of the Dead), the sixth of the third moon, and walking along the top of the city wall (usually the cleanest and most odourless place in the city), we kept coming across graves and their worshippers. It was somewhat surprising to find graves at all on the inner side of the wall. Possibly in some cases they were temporary ones and the bodies would be removed at a later date. Strewn here and there were coffins awaiting interment, which had been indefinitely postponed either for want of money or for family reasons.

At the foot of the grass-grown wall a man, busy lighting a number of tiny fires of incense sticks and paper money, told us that his parents and ancestors were all buried there under the ground, though there was no mark to indicate the spot.

A MANDARIN WITH HIS ATTENDANTS

A melancholy wailing continuing ceaselessly attracted our attention to a woman who was rocking backwards and forwards on her knees over newly turned sods.

It is at this Ching Ming Festival that masses are sung, and food brought to the spirits of the dead to stave off the pangs of hunger through the coming year. In honour of the occasion an immense procession passed through the streets. From our windows we could see the scarlet umbrellas, shaped like gigantic lampshades, and banners floating in the breeze. In gorgeous red sedan-chairs idols sat in state. The city god was being escorted out to the regions beyond the city walls, so that "he" might see that all was in order throughout the length and breadth of his domain! In the procession musicians many and various gave forth the sounds of a score of bagpipes and half a score of drums, playing out of tune.

The comic element was much in evidence. A giant, as primitive in its make-up as the lion in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, was represented by framework supported on a man's shoulders, clothed in such a manner as to give the idea of the head and body of a giant on the legs of a man; and in a gap made in the clothing the face of the man peered out, destroying all illusions.

We went out to see dear H.'s grave in the little "foreign" cemetery, five "li" beyond the city walls. We passed from the crowded street into the Great Peking Road, a rough path of broken flagstones, five

feet wide, between desolate vegetable patches. Ahead of us the Dragon Mountain stood out in a bold mass against the sky—blue and mysterious, beyond the fields of golden "oil plant" and the vast, billowy stretches of grass-grown graves.

A stone wall has recently been built around the "foreign" cemetery, causing great consternation amongst the officials, who tried to wreak their wrath on the native Christian who had "dared" to sell land to the "foreigner." Amongst the handful of graves in this lonely spot there is one of an American sailor from a gunboat. His "foreign" coffin was similar to the cases in which the Chinese store firearms. They were persuaded that the "foreigners" were seizing this opportunity of smuggling firearms into the place, and storing them away in the walled-in cemetery under the pretence of burying an American sailor. In course of time, according to American custom, it is possible that the coffin may be removed to its "native" land. It is sincerely hoped that in this case the grave will be allowed to remain undisturbed, as a move of that kind would only strengthen suspicions in the mind of the Chinese; and in these days of distrust and unrest the least thing may create a disturbance.

In Gankin one finds a curious mixture of ignorant superstition and advanced thought. We were pointed out the great buildings of a mint, furnished with machinery for generating electricity. Already there is electric light in the Yamens, and the streets are to

follow suit before long. The police force, in semi-Western uniforms and German military caps, looks distinctly smart and efficient. Many of the citizens, they say, have given up idolatry, but have drifted away from faith of every kind.

There are three to four thousand Mahommedans in the city, especially noticeable by the traveller for gastronomical reasons. In Chinese cities where there are no Mahommedans *pork* is the only meat to be got, but in Gankin both beef and pork are purchasable.

The Americans have been making great efforts to gain an influence for good over this anti-"foreign" city. They have opened a school for boys, and apparently do not lack for pupils, and have erected a splendid hospital, furnished with all the latest improvements. The Chinese, from the officials downwards, came in eager crowds to celebrate the opening of this palatial building, but have been slow at present in taking advantage of the benefits offered. The patients just now are drawn only from the lowest classes, who are either treated gratis or their expenses defrayed by friends.

We had intended going up the celebrated Gankin Pagoda, but the rain came down in sheets—morning, noon, and night—deluging the city. It leaked in through the roof of our friends' house and trickled down the walls.

We had to catch the steamer that night for Shanghai, and as Gankin is not an open port, none but the Chinese merchant steamers come alongside the wharf. To get on to the others one must trust oneself to

the mercies of a small boat, and board the steamer as it slackens speed, but does not stop, out in the open river. Our sedan-chairs were borne through the darkness to the water-side between ten o'clock and midnight, our bearers apparently wading through deep floods by the sound of the splashing and the gurgling water. Finally we were bumped down in a melancholy tobacconist's shop with a herd of fellow-passengers to await the coming of the steamer.

For half an hour or more we sat waiting, shivering with cold, watching the sleepy shop-assistants making up tiny parcels of tobacco by the dim light of native lamps. Then followed one of the most uncomfortable moments of our journeyings in China. Moving lights in the centre of the river announced the steamer. Fumbling down a slimy slope of mud in the darkness, and across a slippery plank, we stepped into a wide, shallow boat, already tightly packed with Chinese and their bundles. There was no room to sit, there was hardly room to breathe. Wedged in by our fellow-passengers, we stood swaying backwards and forwards in one homogeneous mass as the boat plunged and rocked through the storm-tossed river. The rain was sweeping down in torrents, and, blown by the wind, it seemed as though we must inevitably have been swamped by the moving steamer, which lay ahead of us like an illuminated island swaying in the shadowy waters. Just as the yelling of the boat-men rose to its highest pitch, we made a dive for the side of the vessel and missed the right point; but

the sailors on board threw out ropes and the situation was saved. Helping hands hauled us up on to a deck, and a ship's officer announced that on such a bad night they had hardly expected any Chinese passengers, far less any foreign ones; and he inveighed against the foolhardy way in which these small boats, crowded far beyond their capacity, are sent out in all weathers to sink or swim.

And now we are nearing Shanghai—the outside country, as it is called by some of the inland people—and are leaving the "Flowery Land" for the "East Sea Kingdom." * How delightful it would be if you could join us there. You say there is just a chance.

(*Interval of several months.*)

* Japan.

How wise of you to leave Japan before the rainy season. We waited a whole fortnight longer, and the deluge which commenced on Monday lasted for fourteen days, and was still going on with redoubled rigour when we came away.

We should have returned to China via Korea; I wanted to badly, but the boat I had in my mind Deborah refused to catch, because—"the washing had not come home."

I suppose there were other reasons as well.

Anyway, here we are back in China.

Shanghai in July was in a state of loathsome perspiration. We arrived late in the evening, and as we drove down the dimly lit streets, the open-fronted shops seemed literally oozing with a fleshy mass of bare-backed human beings streaming with heat. Some were resting after the day's work, others were being barbered, others were smoking, and the crowd swelled visibly. The faint, sickly smell of opium mingled with the musty odour of mouse-traps and black-beetles, which comes, they say, from the oil used in cooking, and is never wholly absent from a Chinese street.

The next day we perceived a great change to have

come over the town. The seething mass of coolies, the burden-bearers, the wheelbarrows, the rickshaws, all edged to one side or the other, whilst whizzing down the middle of the road came the "lightning carriage." When these electric cars were first started there were many accidents. It is related that rickshaw coolies, hearing the clanging of the bell, fled precipitately, leaving their "fares" on the rails to be run over.

We came on to Chefoo to be cool, but the residents say they have never known such heat for twenty years. Everybody, from the sewing-woman who sits sewing for us on the balcony to the bishop in the little English church, carries a fan. It seems that in this country of forms and ceremonies even the fan denotes the social standing of its owner. There is the scholar's fan, on which learned sayings are inscribed in gilded characters, and the tradesman's fan—a light, willowy construction of thin black silk, with slender slats of an especially fine quality of bamboo, and the palm-leaf fan of the coolie and the sewing-woman. A lady, as a rule, will have a silken fan—either painted or embroidered, of the screen-like shape of the dried palm-leaf. A mandarin suits his to his costume, and his costume to the time of year. At a given date, no matter what the weather may be like, the wadded winter garments are exchanged for summer silk and gauze. It is altogether unseemly to wear a winter silk (of heavy make) in the summer, or vice versa. The Chinese maintain that we foreigners

fan ourselves too quickly; they think they get much better results by the opposite method of procedure.

The "queue" is, apparently, as significant as the fan. A scholar, for instance, would never lower himself in the eyes of the public by displaying a thick head of hair. A thin and scraggy pig-tail is one of the recognised symbols of high thinking and low living. A man of wealth and leisure, on the contrary, must be plump and sleek, with a thick, well-groomed plait. The Yamen runners consider a long fat "queue" as part of their outfit. It betokens strength and valour, combined with high living and low thinking. How the naturally lean man acquires his adipose tissue, or a rotund scholar gets rid of it, history does not relate. The enlargement of the pig-tail is an easy matter enough, as artificial hair is for sale in every town, and can be woven in so dexterously that it is not easy to detect its presence. Some men—chiefly young men—allow the hair at the nape of the neck to grow out in a long straight fringe; at the same time the "queue" is plaited loosely and untidily. The fashion is extraordinarily unbecoming, and means, moreover, that the man is something of a dandy and belongs to a "fast" set.

It is the middle of August, and according to the Chinese calendar the autumn has begun, but the heat is greater than ever. The thermometer registers eighty-eight in the early morning, and goes up to ninety-six or so in the coolest places one can find.

The scissor-grinders * are enjoying themselves thoroughly. In the grove of willows below the house the shrill screech of the myriads in the branches is like the screech of a million slate-pencils on a million slates. One can hardly hear one's own voice. The ground under the trees is strewn with the crackly, transparent brown shells from which the songsters have recently withdrawn their presence. Their musical powers do not thoroughly develop until they have discarded this suit of armour. The Chinese keep scissor-grinders as "domestic pets." They house them in little boxes, and pit them against each other in fighting matches. It is even said that in some parts of the country scissor-grinders are used as watch-dogs to guard the house from thieves, which may account, perhaps, for the attention lavished on them. They give the signal of an approaching footstep by a sudden, impressive silence, instead of an increase of sound.

I have been amusing myself lately learning to write "character." My gaunt, hungry-looking teacher, with nails more than half an inch long, has been initiating me into some of the mysteries of Chinese letter-writing. The chief aim of a friendly correspondent seems to be to string together a number of high-sounding words which, under the circumstances, mean practically nothing, and above all, to avoid giving any personal news. If, however, there is some little matter which cannot be ignored, he must

* Cicadas.

mention it as briefly as possible, hiding the dry bones of fact in empty complimentary phrases. A letter written in the easy natural style approved of in Western lands, and containing interesting information, would not only fail to give pleasure, but might very likely be a cause of offence, and would certainly be looked upon as a mark of ignorance on the part of the writer.

I occasionally receive a letter from my " sun bride " at Teng Cheo Fu. Her letters are written according to the approved pattern, and the one of six months ago and that of yesterday are practically interchangeable. They begin in this way: " Gracious Teacher, Great One, Unlimited Joy, Perfect Peace," and at this point, and at intervals throughout the letter, two small characters are inserted at the side, which stand for " Female Disciple." She goes on to say that " Gracious Teacher " has " wasted her heart," that she—the disciple—constantly thinks of her, that at the school she has peace and hopes for wisdom to study, and after launching forth into good wishes on my behalf, signs her name of " Tiao Iong Hua," and indicates that, folding her hands humbly inside her sleeves, she respectfully does me homage. I quake to think how barbarous and uncouth my reply will sound to her, and try to soften my bald phrases by adding a little Chinese polish culled from my gaunt teacher, who would gladly have written the letter on his own account. Annoyed with me for declining his services, he ceased to take any interest

in the matter, and sharpened his long nails on the wall and fanned himself.

" Virtuous Female Disciple," I said, " Know fully," and ended up with " purposely this," and " no other words to speak," " May you have peace."

They say it takes many years to acquire a proficiency in Chinese caligraphy. The brush which forms the pen requires very delicate handling, and has to be held straight upright and worked from the elbow. In forming the characters it seemed to me that the first stroke (or that which Westerners would naturally make the first) came last, and vice versa. I argued that the final result was the same, but the teacher only shook his head and would allow no deviation from custom. I filled his heart with delight finally by asking him to address the envelope. It took him some time to do this, at which you will hardly be surprised when you realise its complications. On the front side these words were inscribed :—

" Lo Sï Niang " (my Chinese name) " sends a letter." (One would have thought that wholly superfluous.)

" For female pupil Iong Hua to receive and *tear open !* "

" At Wei Sï Niang School for Girls."

" Sent to reach Teng Cheo Fu inside the city walls to an outside Kingdom place."

On the back side the following enigmatical statements were made :—

"The Ninth Branch."

"The Fifth Heavenly Stem"; and further:—

"The Seventh moon, twenty-third day."

"From the East Hill at Chefoo."

"Sealed!"

In China, as you know, time is divided into cycles of sixty years. The ten stems and the twelve branches are gone through over and over again before the sixty years are up—the former six times and the latter five. So the Ninth Branch and the Sixth Heavenly Stem on the envelope simply means the thirty-fifth year of the present cycle. Besides these ways of calculating time, there are twelve "symbolical" animals presiding over the years and days, and corresponding with the twelve branches. By telling a Chinese the animal which ruled over the year of your birth, after a moment's reflection he will tell you your age at the present time.

My learned B.A., with his long nails, reminds me of another Peking graduate whose home we visited the other day. His business in life is, however, not educational, but agricultural. In China society is roughly divided into four classes—scholars, farmers, artisans, and last and least, tradesmen. To quote the "Sacred Edict":—

"Agriculturists, the world over, are styled the source of power, whilst tradesmen are spoken of as accessories."

Wei Sien Seng, our new acquaintance, seemed a person of no little importance. We were conducted

through the vineyards surrounding his house, gathering the grapes, green, golden, and purple, on our way. The guest-room into which we were shown was arranged in semi-foreign, semi-Chinese style, of all styles the most unattractive, but from the point of view of a modern Chinese extremely "ti-mien" (smart). A harmonium and a bicycle formed the most conspicuous articles of "furniture." Chairs were placed around a table laden with fruit and cakes, with common Anglo-Japanese cups and saucers, instead of the usual dainty Chinese porcelain, and a cupboard with glass doors was evidently a proud possession. Its shelves were filled from end to end with cheap Brummagem ornaments, foreign photographs in cardboard frames, and other rubbish. It would be interesting to know whether an educated Chinese would look at the heterogeneous collection of Chinese and Japanese curios in an ordinary English drawing-room with the same feelings which arose in our minds at this weird jumble of worthless English knick-knacks in this Chinese interior.

Wei Sien Seng's wife, whom we had not the pleasure of seeing, is a very exceptional woman. With her own money she has built a small school, and furnished it with all necessaries, at one end of the gardens, and in it she teaches gratis for a few hours daily a dozen or so small children from neighbouring cottages, who otherwise would get no education at all.

The cry for education is being answered in one way or another all over China. Here and there the answer

takes an unexpected form. A few days ago we went to see a very different type of establishment to Wei Sï Niang's humble little "Dame School," namely, the Naval College, founded and partly built by Yuen Shi Kai, one of the leading statesmen of the day. Up on the hills, behind the foreign settlement, we had long noticed a cluster of native buildings one story high, all fresh paint and plaster, bright, white, and shining, surrounded by grass land and enclosed in white walls. Last year it was still unfinished, this year it is full of naval cadets, and visitors can get permission to go over it. We arrived to find ourselves expected. Two smart young Chinese naval officers, in trim white duck uniforms, which showed up to full advantage their long black "queues," bowed us into the guest-hall—a long room furnished in the style of a second-rate English boarding-house. The table in the centre was covered by a garish cloth, and surrounded by chairs and Japanese black and gold screens. Tea was brought in in Chinese style, and lemonade and mineral water served in tumblers in foreign style. Meanwhile the conversation, held in English, was a little strained. Our hosts put pointed questions in the Chinese fashion, asked where we had come from and where we were going to, but knew enough of English etiquette, apparently, not to enquire our ages or the number of our sons. Finally we were taken over the college. The hundred and sixty pupils at present in residence come from all parts of China, from official and other classes of

society, and are obliged to stay for four years, after which time they will be sent to sea as embryo officers of the Chinese navy. In order to obtain admission they must pass a certain examination and get a nomination from a Chinese nobleman—but—and at this point we are no longer surprised that the college, which has been only open a very few months, is already supplied with pupils—all expenses of education, etc., are defrayed by the Government!

At present the Chinese navy is practically non-existent, never having made good its losses in the Chino-Japanese War of 1895. True, there are some gunboats; one with a yellow dragon and a big eye painted on the bows was lying in Chefoo Bay at the beginning of the month. Still, the hundred and sixty naval cadets will not be ready for five years or so, and much may be done in that time, if, indeed, the Naval College lives up to its ideals. There is plenty of paint and plenty of whitewash, but something light and airy and unsubstantial about the make of the buildings which bodes ill for the future. We looked in through various glass doors at spick and span class-rooms, where Chinese boys in semi-foreign suits of white duck were sitting at foreign desks on foreign forms, learning from foreign books. In one room they were studying English, in another algebra. There were courts behind courts surrounded by one-storied buildings, and at the end of a long passage a shrine and burning incense, a precautionary measure, doubtless to counter-

act the evil influence of the foreign visitors. And yet, forsooth, the very object of the place is to teach our contemptible foreign language and the science of the West, and the very furnishing of the rooms showed in every detail Western influence, more especially, perhaps, than anything else the bath-rooms, twenty or more, with hot and cold water laid on. One isolated two-storied building attracted our attention.

"Ah, that," they said, "is for the foreign professors."

"Who are the foreign professors?" we asked with interest.

But they shook their heads. They had none at all as yet, but were hoping to get some later on!

"Man, man, tih," later on! That is the answer to many an otherwise unanswered question in this land of the Celestials.

At present the only foreigner in connection with the place is an instructor in gunnery, the other masters are all of them Chinese.

Deborah and I have now come to the parting of the ways. She goes back to Teng Cheo Fu, to stay quietly with our friends there, and I dive into the interior again and take steamer to-morrow to Tientsin, then by rail to Huai Luh, and on into Shansi to see something of the bleak north country, where the people are too poor to eat rice, and often have to be content with hot water instead of tea.

A few weeks ago, when crops were suffering from

the drought, some anti-foreign members of the Shansi population sought to propitiate the gods of the harvest by burning models made of dough, which were intended to represent, by their wasplike waists and other strange peculiarities, the dreaded foreigner. A waist of any kind is repellent to the Chinese, so I have provided myself with a long loose coat to propitiate the Shansiites.

I will write anon.

Yours,

V.

Huai Luh,

September, 1908.

I had an amusing time yesterday travelling on the Belgian-Chinese line from Tientsin to Shi Kia Chuang with a first-class ticket which I could not use. The only first-class carriage consisted of a "coupé" holding six seats and an outer compartment devoted to spittoons and a cooking-stove, and the "coupé" was said to be reserved for the Viceroy's Yamen. The Viceroy's party, however, dwindled down to one meek-looking little Tai Tai, a mere girl in appearance, with her maid, who sat with her back to the door, so that none might enter, whilst a man-servant stood guard on the other side. They indicated to me that I, the "foreign barbarian," must stay in the outer compartment with the spittoons and the cooking-stove, the seats of which were now partly occupied by Chinese soldiers. I objected to this, and demanded a seat in the "coupé," where, of course, there was plenty of room to spare. The attendants made excuses. They said the Viceroy had bought tickets for all the seats, but at that moment the ticket-collector came along, which proved the error of this statement. The next reason given was not so easy to refute. The Tai Tai had never seen a foreign lady before

and would die of "fright." On the contrary, I said, she would enjoy the fun of it; but the Yamen servants had strict orders, apparently, and refused to give in. Finally, the ticket-collector explained that a director of the line had given the Tai Tai permission to take entire possession of the "coupé." This, of course, was lie number three, but it seemed useless to argue the matter, and there was no Westerner to be found to see that justice was done, so I settled myself down amongst egg-shells and orange-peel in an untidy second-class carriage, where culinary operations had been in progress. The stove was alight, the day was very warm, and my feelings, moreover, were heated. Later on, however, we took on more carriages and a first-class compartment was again available.

It was dark before we arrived at Shi Kia Chuang. The platform was alive with coloured fireflies darting this way and that—in other words, gay paper lanterns bobbing at the ends of sticks. An army of coolies besieged the train and a couple of stalwart youths seized my baggage.

"I am expecting a foreigner to meet me," I said. "Is there one there?"

"There is! there is!" they answered; and carrying my things, dashed down the bank beyond the platform into the open land beyond. There was no foreigner anywhere in sight, only a seething mass of excited Chinese, who added their shouts to mine and called the runaways back. I held on tightly to

one end of my rug-strap and made them take me in tow. We went down the platform and back again, but there was no foreigner of any sort or description. Wondering what to do next, I heard my name called, and, would you believe it, I had got out on the platform side of the train and ought to have got out at the other, where there was no platform. My friends, not realising that I was unused to these contrary methods, were giving me up for lost—and in the dim light of paper lanterns it was, of course, uncommonly difficult to make out one person from another.

Shi Kia Chuang is a junction of the Shansi line with the Peking line, and there being only one train during the day, most travellers to Shansi stay there for the night. There is a modern Chinese inn—cleaner than most, but built in the style of the old camel inns. In the guest-rooms the "kêngs," or brick beds, occupied the whole of one side of the apartment, like a spacious platform; but my own room was more meagre, and its chief furniture consisted of cart-wheels, newly made and newly varnished, waiting to be exported to Peking. The next morning we started forth soon after daylight to catch the one train of the day, and arrived at Huai Luh in time for breakfast. I stayed at Huai Luh for two days with friends of Kay's of the China Inland Mission.

This was my first introduction to the famous Loess soil—for a long time, according to one eminent authority, a "geological puzzle," and said to be the

only crop-producing soil in the world which never requires artificial fertilising. Both in colour and texture it resembles dust—khaki-tinted dust—and the effect is mournful in the last degree. There is no getting away from it. The squat, square houses of the town were built of Loess bricks dried in the sun, the flat roofs were the same colour as the walls, the roads were like dried water-courses or wide ditches between crumbling banks of khaki-coloured Loess eighteen and twenty feet or more in depth. One characteristic point about this strange powdery soil is that it has a way of splitting up into clefts which branch out in every direction through all the wide tract of Loess country. In places the formation becomes that of a series of terraces. Wherever cultivation is possible, the land is planted out in crops of sorghum, wheat, millet, sweet potatoes, beans, etc., but fields on the upper level are apt to grow smaller every year as the edges break off or a sudden cleft in the soil carries a part of them to depths below. Consequently the wily farmer usually buys the land at the foot of his field, that he may be none the poorer eventually. There are no hedges, nothing but broken ridges of Loess soil, and owing to the deep clefts and crumbling banks, the surroundings of Huai Luh reminded one of a collection of building plots, in which the foundations of future houses had been dug out and then deserted. Now and then a spreading tree made a delightful oasis of green on the dun-coloured land, and the hills

three miles or so away were soft blue and amethyst in the distance, guarded by shadowy mountains.

The house where I am staying was one of the houses of tragedy in 1900. In a little book entitled *In Deaths Oft*, a simple but very impressive account has been given of their experiences by our friends at Huai Luh in that eventful year. They relate how finally they were compelled to flee from their house and took refuge in the hills, first in a temple and then in a cave, finally in a farmhouse, only to be discovered in the end by the Boxers and carried forth to die. Seven times over they were in imminent danger of their lives, seven times over miraculously delivered from what appeared to be certain death, and at last, more dead than alive, they were rescued by the Allied Forces. It was not until their return, when the country was again at peace, that they learnt of their landlord's treachery. For three long weeks before their flight two men had been commissioned to bring about their death, and had lain in hiding on the flat roof of one of the adjoining houses, waiting for them to go out into the street, so that the house itself should be saved from being the scene of the murder. But the men missed their opportunity, after all, and never got it again. The treacherous landlord, who should by rights have forfeited his life, was, by the intervention of the foreigners whom he had tried to destroy, granted forgiveness. At the present time I believe they are actually on *friendly* terms with each other.

That these heroic people should have come back again to the scene of the indescribable sufferings through which they passed, to work again amongst the people who were in league with their would-be murderers, ranks, I think, amongst the finest records of Christianity.

The railway near Huai Luh runs through an old graveyard of the Ming dynasty. Large compensation was given to those people whose family graves happened to be in the proximity, or had to be moved to allow the line to be built. Such lucrative possessions did these graves become that their numbers increased enormously in a few hours. In many Chinese graveyards one passes through acres upon acres of grass-grown mounds—all of them exactly alike, with no mark to recognise them by—and one wonders how it is that the Chinese always know their own family graves, and never by any chance make a mistake. They have, it is true, an unerring instinct with regard to the points of the compass, and use the terms north, south, east, and west—or rather east, south, west, and north (as the Chinese put it)—on all occasions. For instance, they will say "the south dish" or the "east dish," instead of "the dish at the end of the table," or "He has gone over to the north," instead of "He is at the other side of the garden," and I was told of a woman the other day who was complaining of a pain in her ear.

"Which ear is it?" asked the doctor.

"It is the one to the west," she said, "and I am facing north."

The choosing of a site for a grave is fraught with many difficulties. The geomancers choose a place where the Azure Dragon * and the White Tiger † "unite harmoniously," and where there is no water-course which, running straight from the selected spot, may carry away the "vital breath," and where also there is no pernicious breath—a straight line, for instance, pointing towards the grave. The straight lines of the "foreign barbarians'" railways have done great damage over and over again, both to the Azure Dragon and the White Tiger.

Considering how deeply rooted in the minds of the people is this "Feng Shui" ‡ superstition, one marvels that railways in China have increased as much as they have done. The one I travelled by to Tai Yüen Fu—the capital of Shansi—is "run" by Westerners and has only been open a few months.

The journey took twelve hours, but there were many halts. Every twenty minutes or so we drew up at a solitary station—a toy building on a toy platform occupied by a long line of soldiers, which gave a touch of the unfamiliar to the otherwise commonplace railway premises. But the country through which we were travelling was by no means common-

* Positive current. † Negative current.

‡ Literally "wind and water." "Its basic principle is that Earth is but the reflection of Heaven." *China: its History, Arts, and Literature.*—Capt. F. Brinkley.

SOUTH GATE AT TAI YÜEN FU

place. The train crept laboriously uphill—worming its way through the mountains into the province of Shansi, and meandered along through wide tracts of the Loess country—through cuttings in Loess cliffs hundreds of feet deep, past vast terraced regions of the powdery khaki-tinted soil, on to high ridges from which one looked down on to sunken roads at the foot of precipices and into deep hollows of the crumbling dun-coloured earth. The walls of the houses were built chiefly of Loess bricks, ranged in straight rows one on top of the other, like old vellum books on invisible shelves, and covered with plaster, which in many cases had peeled off. The flat roofs and Loess walls being identical in colour to the surrounding soil, the towns were practically invisible from afar. There were no trees anywhere. Now and again large dark, tunnel-like holes punctured the face of a cliff. These turned out to be cave-dwellings, which are favourite residences in this part of the country.

At Tai Yüen Fu my friend, Miss S., was there to meet me. We crawled on all fours into one of the springless covered carts, and our "bones were rattled over the stones," along the rough track to the city gates. My Chinese name was given to the sentry on guard, and we passed through into a wide street lined with high walls and low-roofed houses, and dotted with trees—the very sight of which was a joy in this barren Loess country. A couple of hundred yards down we drew up at shabby double doors

under a porch with a curved roof, and following my hostess through a labyrinth of tiny courtyards, each one opening out of the other round some unexpected corner, we came at last to a little garden, round which cheerfully lighted pavilions (they turned out afterwards to be bedrooms and sitting-rooms) announced that we had "arrived."

. . . . . .

Tai Yüen Fu interests me greatly.

A little more than eight years ago it was, alas! the scene of one of the most terrible massacres of modern times. Every foreigner in the place—man, woman, and child—was done to death, and horrors, the history of which no one fully knows or ever speaks about, save with bated breath—were enacted in this very city before the eyes of all these people whom we pass daily in the streets, and who look at us half in wonder, half in contempt. A little more than eight years ago they flattered themselves they had got rid of the "outer barbarians" for ever.

But it was not so.

Here they are all back again in greater numbers than before; the buildings that were razed to the ground have been re-erected and are twice the size of the old ones; new "foreign" houses have sprung into existence. The dreaded "iron road" and "fire carriage" have ventured to within half a "li" of the city gates, and an "Imperial University" for the acquirement of Western learning, with two

hundred Chinese graduates in residence, has cropped up in their very midst under a staff of Western professors, and is approved of and smiled upon by His Excellency the "Fu," who on the occasion of a recent examination attended the University himself day after day for a whole week to "drink tea" and lend his countenance to the proceedings!

This University was built, by the way, with the indemnity money which the Protestant Missions refused to take after the 1900 massacres, stipulating, however, that it should be used for purposes of education in the city. Other schools and colleges have been started by the Chinese themselves. There are said to be several thousand students in Tai Yüen Fu, so that the two hundred in the Western University are but a small proportion of the whole.

The Government school for girls is quite a new institution. In their efforts to get pupils, education is given gratis, and some are even paid to attend.

The two most advanced scholars in my friend's school were won over by a promise of money! We went over the buildings one day, and were amused to see that the pupils varied from five and six to fifty and sixty years of age! Probably, as Chinese women look old for their years, the latter were, in reality, thirty or forty. There seems to be some difficulty in getting efficient teachers. One or two of them are "Tai Tai's," women of position and property, who give their services gratis. From the textbooks one realised that the subjects taught were Western sub-

jects. If the letterpress is as ludicrous as some of the illustrations, one wonders in what strange form Western ideas are presented to these enquiring Chinese minds. The books that we saw were distinctly elementary; but many of the scholars of course, even the elderly ones, were only just beginning their education on Western lines. On the part of the latter it showed a good deal of pluck to begin it at all!

The English class had been given up as hopeless. This was hardly surprising when one considered that the teachers had only had something like half a dozen lessons themselves to begin with and had deeply resented all corrections.

A "Tai Tai" who lives next door, and comes in sometimes to call, tells us that in a Chinese girls' school punishments usually consist of blows on the palm of the hand with a flat stick. In the case of a child, however, whose offence has been exceptionally great, the culprit is "sentenced" to take the punishment into her own hands! Apparently it is a point of honour to do the deed thoroughly, and a child who has beaten herself will have a horribly bruised and swollen hand for days to come!

I have taken on an English class in my friend's school for a week or two, and the other morning the children gathered round me at the end of the lesson with an eager request. They wanted to know whether my "front teeth took out," and when I laughingly refuted the idea their faces fell, and

I knew I had distinctly lowered myself in their estimation.

There is a great charm about these Chinese girls with their dainty, courteous ways and dark eyes which light up merrily at the least encouragement. But everything in China has its surprises, and the gentle little schoolgirls are no exception to the rule. My hostess once planned to give them a treat on her birthday. They were to choose what it was to be. Picture to yourself those dainty little maidens had but one wish—they wanted to go to the execution ground to see the beheading! Needless to say, a second choice was requested.

This last week we have been paying calls on some of the "Tai Tai's" of Tai Yüen Fu, and others of more humble social standing. Left to myself, I should have found difficulty in telling one from the other, except in a few special cases. As to the guest-rooms, there is a strong similarity between them wherever you go. The chief piece of furniture—a table placed against the wall like an altar, with its set of metal incense burners, its vases and candle-sticks: on either side—two solid chairs of dark wood or ebony—the seats of honour. If there happens to be a cloth on the table, in accordance with Chinese custom, it is hung across the front instead of being spread over the top!

The floor is usually of flag-stones more or less uneven, the walls of plaster which is peeling off. A few scrolls, and occasionally a mirror, adorn the walls, and—if the

room happens to be a living-room as well as a guest-room—one side of it is filled by the inevitable "kêng," which at night serves as a bedroom for the whole family, and in the daytime does duty as a sofa, a bench, a table, a bookshelf—anything you please. The windows, of course, are of paper and the light is subdued.

We were asked to call on a "Tai Tai" who belonged to one of the Yamens, but who, in her desire for a quiet life, had gone to live in a neighbouring "kong kuan" (palace). Expecting our visit, she was dressed and "painted" to receive us. A group of relatives and handmaidens escorted us across an inner court to the guest-room. After long haggling as to who should have the left-hand seat of honour at the altar-like table, I was pressed into it, as the "hsin lai tih keh" (the newly arrived guest). Conversation was difficult, as the "Tai Tai," a southerner, was not accustomed to northern mandarin. A bright-faced girl, however, joined in the talk with fluency. It turned out that she was the second wife, and as between the first and the second wife there is apt to be jealousy, care had to be taken to devote most of the attention to our somewhat silent and uninteresting hostess.

On these occasions, when tea is brought in, etiquette ordains that one must refrain from raising the cup to one's lips until especially requested to do so. Even then good manners require one to offer it, first of all, to the hostess, who, however, signifies her

refusal, but reiterates her invitation. The handling of the cup requires caution. To be polite, two hands should be used and the cover not removed, only pushed slightly back to allow the tea without leaves to ooze through to one's lips. Strange cakes of squashed dates in savoury paste are offered, which you must on no account refuse to eat. Nobody believes that you do not want more when you have finished the first. Fingers which are by no means clean thrust a fresh supply of dainties into your hands and pile them up on the table beside your cup. At the end of the visit you hug your waist with many bows and smiles.

The hostess says, "When you are not busy, come again and sit a little."

"We will come again to wish you peace," we reply. And again we all bow.

"Forgive my not accompanying you," she answers. "Walk slowly."

"Detain your steps," we hasten to add. "Do not come out. We do not want to be treated with ceremony" (literally, "not want guest's breath"), and again we all bow.

But the hostess does not retreat. At every corner the performance is repeated. Sometimes she comes as far as the outer gate, and the leave-takings seem endless. According to strict etiquette the person of superior rank must be the first to turn the back, but sometimes, in the case of a Chinese and a foreigner, the social standing is difficult to decide. Neither wishes

to pretend to be superior to the other in rank, and much time is wasted.

On the occasion of our visit to the "Tai Tai's" in the "kong kuan" they insisted, to my horror, on paying the fare of the two covered carts which were waiting for us at the door!

Etiquette varies, and is not so strict amongst the women as amongst the men. Should a "Tai Tai" desire to get rid of a guest who has stayed too long, she simply orders the servant to make some more tea. The guest, recognising the signal, rises immediately! There are no less than three thousand rules of behaviour. If anyone exists who knows and obeys them all, I cannot say, but to a greater or less degree they permeate all classes of society. The cultivated manners of the cook and the coolie are often astonishing.

Another day I was taken to call on an elderly Manchu lady who had known the Dowager-Empress in her youth. In those days the Manchu "Tai Tai" was in a much better social position than the "Huang Tai Ho," but the see-saw of time has sent the one up and the other down; and whilst the Dowager-Empress rules in power over the Dragon Throne and the "Son of Heaven" himself, the old Manchu "Tai Tai" lives in a couple of rooms leading into a paved court around which other families have their humble dwelling-places. In the inner chamber, however, into which we were bidden, there were some handsome pieces of furniture

and choice bits of porcelain — relics of former grandeur.

The "Tai Tai" was seventy-three—the same age as the Empress—but old for her years. Her eyes were very dim and her back was very bent, but her memory retained its vigour. With a little encouragement she told us of the days of her youth, when the Empress Yehonala, a young and strikingly handsome girl, lived in the city of Tai Yüen Fu. Her father, a small official, had died a year or two previously, leaving his family in somewhat straitened circumstances. The mother, much to the indignation of her son, married again.

The home was not a happy one. Yehonala's brother, enraged with his mother, did all in his power to thwart her. Yehonala, on the contrary, took her mother's part. The day arrived, however, when her home life came to an abrupt end. In accordance with custom, a certain number of daughters of Manchu officers, selected on account of their good looks, were sent up to Peking to be passed in review before the mother of the Emperor, who chose from amongst them girls for the Imperial "harem." The first choice fell upon the handsome maiden from Tai Yüen Fu.

In course of time a son was born to Yehonala, whose name had now been changed to "Tzi Hsi," whereas the Emperor's real wife had no son. Thus gradually Tzi Hsi, who was very clever as well as very beautiful, became more and more powerful, and when finally the Emperor's first wife and then the

Emperor himself "became guests on high," Tzi Hsi found herself practically in possession of the Dragon Throne, and mercilessly did she use the power that had become hers so unexpectedly.

With a bitterly revengeful spirit, she never forgave or forgot an injury, either real or fancied. She hunted down everyone who in any way had been unfriendly towards her dead father, or probably, in the more refined Chinese style, presented them each with a white scarf, which mark of attention would leave them no alternative but to put an end to themselves, and that as speedily as possible. As to her mother, during her lifetime she lavished gifts upon her of great magnificence, but after her death was fiercely determined that the hated brother should in no wise profit by his mother's property, to which he had a legal right, and gave secret orders that the house should be burnt to the ground and everything utterly destroyed!

Listening to the old "Tai Tai's" reminiscences, and thinking of 1900, the shadow of which still haunts the city of Tai Yüen Fu, one felt that the beautiful Yehonala had, alas! more than fulfilled the promise of her youth. It is said—and by those in high places—that once again before she dies she means to try a second time to sweep the hated foreigner from the country.

Meanwhile, though there are rumours of unrest, there are no visible signs of any. The gentlest member of our household, the cook, is a Boxer. He is a

man with an engaging smile, who seems to have a magnetic attraction for all the household pets—in other words, two *unchained* cats and a dog. In the west of China cats were chained up, while dogs ran loose!

Anyway, they are far more valuable out here than at home. Abbé Huc tells of some that were used as clocks. From nine till eleven the pupil of the cat's eye is large and round; from one till three, pointed at each end; from eleven till one, a single thread, and so on.

But to return to our Boxer cook. Not long ago he expressed his wish to take to himself a wife. Not having money enough for the purpose, my friend very generously gave him forty dollars towards the desired acquisition. He found someone who from all accounts seemed suitable. My friend naturally asked for particulars.

The cook's face beamed.

"She has two cupboards," he said, "and a table!"

"Yes, yes! But what is she like—in character?"

It was hopeless. All the answer she could get was:

"Two cupboards and a table!"

They are excellent servants, these Chinese, as everybody knows, and in the bliss of ignorance there are times when I hanker after bringing a few back with me. I begin to realise, however, some of the difficulties in connection with them.

Thanks to the fact that everybody is in league with everybody else, it becomes uncommonly hard to get

rid of a servant who does not want to go, or to engage another against whom the others have an objection.

The school cook was given notice to quit, as his cooking was not up to the mark. He took his dismissal cheerfully, and a new cook was engaged to come in the following week. On the morning when he should have arrived a message was sent in to say his "wife was dying" and therefore he could not appear for a few days. Thereupon the old cook was asked if he would "oblige" for a short time longer. Smilingly he declined, saying he would "lose face" if he did so after having been given notice to quit.

The table boy, therefore, was sent for and told to get in the cook's brother to serve as a stop-gap, but the table boy had a plan worth two of that! He returned a moment or so later to say that the old cook would be prepared to stay if, on the arrival of the new cook, he might be given another post in the house, and as more visitors were arriving and extra help would be needed before long, my friend agreed.

The servants having got what they wanted, the "dying wife" regained her health in a few hours and all went smilingly.

A Chinese cook is never at a loss. In foreign circles, where knowledge of the Chinese language is held at a discount, the affairs of the kitchen are regulated in a manner which would surprise not a little the mistress of the house. Should it happen one day that an impromptu invitation to dinner has been

given and accepted, the cook when informed that guests are coming, " Catchee chow this side " shows no perturbation of mind. He merely goes off to the house of the invited guests and makes their cook hand over the dinner they would have eaten had they been at home.

When accounts are given in at the end of the week both cooks are gainers. The cook whose master and mistress went out charges them for the dinner they did not eat and makes a " squeeze " out of the cook who " borrowed " the dinner, who in his turn charges for the entertainment of the guests. It is difficult to be even with them, as I found to my cost when I suggested to the table boy that I should like to buy one of the embroidered Manchu gowns.

His face brightened.

In an incredibly short space of time he appeared with an assortment. The man to whom they belonged remained in the background. It was (we shrewdly guessed) the table boy who arranged the prices with a view to heavy " squeezes " on his own account. For once he overreached himself. We decided they were much too dear and would have none of them.

I little knew what I was doing. Thereafter, whenever I tried to buy a Manchu gown, the way was barred. The table boy had determined that I must get one through him or not at all. I enquired at the shops ; they had none, or only some that were too small or otherwise unsuitable. I asked the other

servants; they shook their heads, or smilingly said "yes" and meant "no."

Finally I confided my difficulties to a neighbouring "Tai Tai," and through her succeeded in effecting my wished-for purchase. The table boy had been foiled at last, but he behaved with greater amiability than ever.

I notice that he makes purses of the lobes of his ears, and extracts twenty-cent pieces from them like a conjurer. This seems to be another thrifty custom of the Chinese; but though their ears are often abnormally large, their capacity in the matter of coins would soon be exhausted!

. . . . . .

October 11th.

I am enthusiastic over the Tai Yüen Fu climate, except on those days when the wind blows the light powdery Loess soil in thick clouds of dust through the air and covers the houses inside and out with grit. The plain whereon the city is situated is two thousand feet above sea-level; the air is crisp and invigorating. I have a "mountain" appetite and energy to match, but they tell me that appetite goes after a while, and sleep fails, and one's hair falls off, and one's skin dries up, and one's bones crack from the excessive dryness of the atmosphere, and that altogether the climate of North China is "trying to the nerves."

PAGODAS AT TAI YÜEN FU

This statement apparently does not apply to the natives ; one does not hear much of nervous ailments in China : one hears more of plague and famine and fever. The plague is raging not far off at the present time, and Tai Yüen Fu is never free from typhus and smallpox. About thirty years ago this district was partly depopulated by a terrible famine, and is still sparsely inhabited in comparison to many other parts of China.

The city at the present time contains about twenty-five thousand inhabitants, and there is room for many more. In the country round one is struck by the absence of people and the scarcity of human habitations. The surroundings of the city are bleak and desolate. I was lent a horse one day, and rode out with some friends to the two melancholy khaki-coloured pagodas standing side by side on a bit of rising ground—three stories high and touched up with blue-enamelled tiles. Every town of any consequence owns at least one pagoda—built to control its destinies, to impart good influences, and repress evil ones.

Occasionally they have been known to fail in their purpose. I have read of one in West China which was partly pulled down after a few years, not very long ago, as the Dragon was said to be feeling uncomfortable—from the weight of the pagoda pressing on his body. In his irritation he hindered the literary success of the neighbourhood, and no one had attained an M.A. degree for seven years. When, however, the

pagoda had been diminished in height a scholar of the city came out with flying colours at the next examination. It was evident to all concerned that the Dragon was appeased !

We rode along through wide stretches of more or less level vegetable fields, broken and scarred by sunken paths and roadways like dried water-courses between high "cliffs" of dun-coloured Loess soil. From the rising ground by the pagodas we could see for miles around on every side across the treeless, sunburnt, dust-swept plain to the distant hills—blue and hazy in the waning light of the day.

As to the city itself, three miles to the west of us, like all Chinese cities, it "hides its light under a bushel." There is nothing to be seen of it but the city wall—mud-coloured and darkened with age. The gates are shut at six (seven in the summer), and only in a case of life and death can they be reopened. From the top of the wall, however, a Chinese city often appears to be what it is not—a charming rural village, or group of villages, embowered in trees ; but as you come down from the wall and plunge through the dust, ankle deep in the roads around the gates, and enter one of the busy streets and thread your way through some of the narrow alleys, between high walls and past dingy courtyards and unspeakable rubbish heaps, you ask yourself what has become of the trees. They have disappeared entirely, and are shut inside inner courts, where few may penetrate.

Just outside the south gate of the city a corner of

the great wall looks as though it were festooned with crimson hangings, and the trunk of an old tree standing in the shadow is as highly decorated as the wall.

"What can that be?" I asked, straining my eyes to see more clearly.

"Why, that is the tree," they said, "where the spirit of the Fox resides," and we walked across the field to see it.

The red hangings turned out to be red paper, sheets upon sheets of it, inscribed in characters which to me were enigmatical, chiefly prayers for help in times of sickness and thanksgivings for mercies received.

For the fox, though veiled in a certain amount of mystery, is said to have strange powers in China. He sees all things, hears all things, and secrets are known unto him. He can transform himself at will into other forms, and when one thousand years old becomes white or golden, and after that period his powers are greater than ever.

It is said that a year or two ago this Tai Yüen Fu Fox went away for a time. How it was known that he had come back to his old haunts history does not relate, but it was evident from the masses of paper prayers, etc., which are gradually covering a long stretch of the wall, that his services are much in request!

One marvels that the creature of the "sacred" tree should be a fox instead of a tiger. The latter meets one on all occasions—painted as large as life and even larger on the walls outside big houses to keep

off evil spirits, sold in the form of silver cap ornaments and stuffed pillows, and embroidered on the toes of babies' shoes to save them from illness. Yesterday I saw one made of silk, with a tail curled over at the tip like the handle of a teapot, sewn on to the back of a child's tunic. It had the power, they said, of warding off infection!

To-morrow I am starting off on a little journey down the province in a cart—one of those springless Pekingese carts in which everybody travels in these parts, except those who ride on horseback. I forget whether I have described them to you before. They are the hansom-cabs of Tai Yüen Fu, and we drive out in them on all occasions. There is no seat; you curl up as best you can on the floor of the cart. You try to keep your balance by holding on with a hand to either side—not, indeed, to avoid falling out, of which there is no danger, but to prevent yourself from being dashed against the wooden sides, against which, in the case of a sudden lurch in an extra deep rut, you may receive a stunning blow on the head. As to sitting up comfortably and enjoying the scenery, that, too, is impossible. The hood of the cart is like a dish-cover planked down on the top of you, and tilted up a little at one end, showing the erratic movements of the mule in the shafts. The driver usually walks by the side and seldom holds the reins. He leaves them dangling on the back of the creature and guides by his voice, using a set of phrases which Chinese mules understand better than anything else.

Hence a foreigner who attempts Western methods of driving is utterly lost. His only hope lies in the acquirement of the approved vocabulary. I know the beginning of it: "li li" means "left"; "üeh üeh" = "right"; "tr-r-r-r" = "stop"; "te-te-te" = "go on." The right *tone* must be used, however, or the mule turns a deaf ear.

After weeks upon weeks of dry weather the rain has suddenly started coming down in bucketfuls. We have delayed a day because of it, and now they say the roads are almost impassable. Whether we shall get anywhere or nowhere remains to be seen, and we are taking spades and "things" in order to dig ourselves out if we get stuck!

Good-bye for the present.

Yours,

V.

PING YAO,
October 28th.

We have been five days on the road doing about eighty miles, and we meant to be two! But if you could have seen first the vehicles in which we travelled, and then the roads, you would have marvelled at our ever getting anywhere at all! I had intended to have one of the Tai Yüen Fu hansom cabs, which I described to you in my last letter, but for some reason or other none could be got, and the "ta chae" (big cart) was far more comfortable for a long journey.

How can I describe it to you? The wheels were the chief feature—great oval wheels studded with gigantic nails. A few planks loosely put together formed the body of the cart, and the roof consisted of a piece of matting arched over from side to side. A couple of horses and a mule—the strongest in the shafts, the others some distance off, linked on by ropes, made up the team. My bedding was spread on the planks for me to sit on, and my boxes heaped up behind to lean against. I was in luxury in comparison to the rest of the party. In the other cart ten native women and two children, shapeless masses of wadded garments, were packed closely together as much out

A SHANSI INN

of sight as possible under the matting hood. Mrs. F., my Ping Yao hostess, made the eleventh adult in that other cart until I arrived on the scene.

As it was, it seemed to me the two of us had none too much room. I marvelled at the good humour of the ten women and the two children. Outside the city gates the roads were a slough more than a foot deep of slimy chocolate mud. One calls them *roads*, but they are only tracks worn deeper and deeper through many hundreds of years. The very name is significant. In the north of China a road is called " tao " (a way) instead of " lu " (a road).

Early in the day we came to an abrupt standstill. The cart with the ten women had sunk so deeply into a rut that no amount of pulling was any good. They unharnessed a couple of our horses and hitched them on to the struggling team, but with no effect. Finally, the carters had recourse to the spades, and the half-buried wheels were dug out.

At midday we halted for lunch. Of all miserable places in bad weather, a Shansi inn is the worst. The yard into which we were obliged to dismount might have been a pig-sty, and the rooms, with their mud floors and torn-paper windows, were just good enough for cow-sheds.

The rain had started again, and all the afternoon we dragged on slowly through a river of slush, heaving half over every now and then in a miry pit. We were still a good ten miles from the end of the first day's stage. It was getting dark, and the road and the

fields looked much of a muchness—one dreary stretch of mud and water.

We drew up suddenly and only just in time. A few more steps would have landed us in a stream. The bridge was broken down—and progress barred. But not a bit of it—a Chinese is never at a loss; he finds a way out somehow always. With marvellous ingenuity they mended the bridge with bundles of "ko-liang" stalks (sorghum), and shovelled on stones and mud with the ever-useful spades.

But at the next village we came to they were determined to go no further.

"Was there an inn?" we asked.

Well, there was something that would do for an inn, and driving us into a mud-yard, we were bundled out into the pouring rain. Much argument ensued. It was evident that there was no room for us anywhere. But they were willing to do what they could.

Seldom have guest-chambers been less inviting. The inner half of the stable, in which a horse stood munching its chopped straw, was turned into a temporary bedroom, and the landlord's family vacated a musty though gratefully warm apartment in our honour. As to the ten women, they were relegated to a barn, in which there was, at all events, no lack of ventilation. We spread our supper cloth on the brick bed and ordered basins of "mi-t'ang," a kind of water gruel made of millet in which pieces of pumpkin floated uninvitingly. The pumpkins, by the

way, formed part of the furniture of my bedroom, and were piled up tier above tier in goodly array. The walls were black with grease, and one could have planted out vegetables in the mould and dust collected on the floor in those places where traffic was suspended!

The rain fell incessantly all night and half the next day. When we finally started forth once more the country lay half under water. The main road had quite disappeared; and this not only on account of the heavy rains, but it seemed that the annual irrigation of the fields had commenced, and as the main road is on a distinctly lower level than the fields, it becomes impassable at this season of the year. We had to take to the by-roads, and they were beset with difficulties. Time and time again we stopped to repair a broken bridge before we could venture across.

The Shansi plain in this mournful weather looked bleaker than ever. Nothing but level stretches of half-fledged fields on every side, now and then a thinly clad, angular elm tree or a shivering willow, and nothing to relieve the monotony of the scene but an occasional mud village—little square, flat-roofed houses with mud walls, few doors and fewer windows, huddled round a pond of slush; the only difference between a street and a road being that the mud was considerably deeper in the former—so deep, indeed, that one did not wonder that there was nobody about. Men and women in wadded blue cotton garments

peered out of the doors of the houses, however, to see us pass, staring at us meditatively as cows might stare.

There were few other travellers on the road—a pack-mule or so, an occasional hooded cart, and that was all; but once or twice the deep bass note of camel bells drowned the feverish tinkling of our mule bells, and slowly, silently, like creatures in a dream, gazing with uplifted eyes straight in front of them at nothing in particular, a long procession of the shaggy beasts passed by in single file, pressing the mud down with their huge padded feet.

We only did ten miles that day, and the next day, a Sunday, stayed at Hsü-keo. That afternoon we were invited to dine at the house of some friendly neighbours. The dinner-hour, by the way, was between three and four! Our hostess lived with her sons and her sons' wives and their children in a large and substantial house, built in pavilions round a flagged courtyard. After drinking tea and eating dates preserved in wine we sat down to dinner, four guests in all, whilst our hostess and her daughter merely put their heads in at the door every now and again to see how we were getting on! The whole duty of the guests seemed to be to eat, and eat largely, and to eat silently, and to do nothing else but eat, except now and again to assist in the transference of morsels, tempting or otherwise, from their own basins to those of their companions.

On Monday we started again in our quest for Ping

Yao. The rain held off, but the mud was heavier than ever. In spite of travelling all day steadily, we achieved no more than twenty miles. At the inn where we stopped for lunch the cook, being a Christian, came out eagerly to wish the " foreign teachers " peace and begged to be allowed to pay for their food !

That night we were in luck's way, and instead of having to put up at a comfortless inn, were received with friendly hospitality by the Chinese in charge of a China Inland Mission out-station, and who had been expecting us, they said, for days, and had prepared a savoury stew and a plate of " mo-mo " (steamed bread), tasting partly of dough, partly of putty.

They burnt a few sheaves of sorghum stalks in the stove under the " kêng," which filled the room with smoke and warmed up the " kêng " for us to sit on and afterwards to sleep on.

There was a sharp frost that night. Next morning ice lay thick on the puddles, and the wind, keen and easterly, blew in our faces. The country was windswept and deserted, but had we been travelling that way a few weeks ago we should have met a Thibetan army—in other words, the Dalai Lama on his way to Peking with his immense following—hundreds of mules and camels, priests, soldiers, and attendants. And as he advanced on his " royal progress " the order went forth that all men should fall on their faces and do homage to him as he passed.

My Ping Yao friends—Mr. and Mrs. F., of the China Inland Mission—were on their way back from a country journey at the time and came face to face with the lordly Thibetan. Naturally they made no attempt to comply with the command, but the soldiers, perceiving them to be "outside Kingdom folk," offered no protest. The Dalai Lama and his following had stayed one night only at the town of Ping Yao, but the bill for that night's expenses, paid by the citizens, came to nearly four hundred pounds!

At a temple outside Tai Yüen his visit, of some weeks' duration, had considerably impoverished the local treasury. He is now on his way to Peking. The evil doings of his undisciplined followers have left a dark trail behind him, and the Dalai Lama himself was not blameless. At one place it is said that, seeing women in the crowd gathered to watch him pass (whereas the presence of women had been forbidden), he gave orders to his soldiers to beat them to death; and the story goes that the order was carried out then and there.

Five days I have stayed at Ping Yao, enjoying the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. F. in a house which was once a camel inn and is still surrounded by camel inns (I hear the deep note of their bells as they pass in the night). We are outside the west gate of the city—the open country, bare and treeless and ending in hills, looks empty and desolate—and often as the light is waning one can see, so they tell me, the sneaking shadow of a wolf seeking for prey.

No one would think, from the appearance of it, that Ping Yao was famous for its wealth. It is said to be the richest city in the whole province and is a perfect nest of bankers. To quote a familiar saying: "Shansi men love gain, but do not value their lives!" Their financial ability is recognised all over China. Shansi bankers have found their way not only into the whole of the eighteen provinces, but through into Central Asia.

Even a pawnshop hardly hopes for success without a Shansi man for its manager. Pawnshops are great institutions in China—patronised more or less by all classes. There are three grades, and the top grade numbers those in high places amongst its clients, and even occasionally is called upon to lend money to the Government! The banks, by the way, transmit messages one to the other by carrier pigeons, and with great success. Pigeons are household pets over here. The ordinary species is often furnished with a whistle attached to its tail, and as it flies the wind blows the whistle.

On my drives in hooded carts through the streets of Ping Yao I look in vain for signs of its wealth. Mud seems the chief characteristic of the town. The centre of the road is wet mud, the sides of the road are dry mud banked up seven or eight feet in height. When another cart comes along—fortunately this seldom happens—one or the other has to climb up the bank at the side to make room. Most of the shops vie with each other in keeping their goods out

of sight; but one recognises the "cash" shops, of which there are seventy or more, by the long strings of copper coins dangling from the roof. The grander places of merchandise are protected from too much publicity by strips of black cloth, which hang like straight blinds across the upper half of the open front. In the main street of the city a three-storied, pagoda-roofed, drum tower, one mass of gorgeous colouring, a blaze of enamelled tiles, blue, green, and scarlet, and woodwork richly painted and gilded, looks as out of place as a jewelled throne in a farmyard!

A Taoist temple, surrounded by buyers and sellers, barbers and fortune-tellers, stands near the east gate of the city, and in it the City God, a painted wooden idol, sits enthroned. I was told an interesting fact the other day with reference to idols. When a new one is made it is sent to the temple for which it is intended, complete in every detail save one—it has no eyes! and until these are added it is a thing of naught. Just as soon, however, as the eyes have been put in, the living spirit of the being supposed to be represented by the idol enters into possession. Once in my life, and only once, have I seen an idol's "*soul*," a metal pendant made up of tiny models of interior organs—heart, kidneys, lungs, etc. These are all shaken up together with a living fly, and as the fly suffers martyrdom its life passes into the pendant and becomes an idol's soul!

Further along inside the east wall, in striking con-

trast to the Taoist temple, stand the great solemn buildings of the Confucian edifice, opening on to a silent court planted with trees. A rusty key was turned for me in a rusty lock, and I entered the "sacred" precincts. In the dim light one could just make out the Confucian tablet, over an altar, in the centre of the hall. The absence of idols, and of tawdry symbols, impresses one with a sense of dignity in these Confucian halls; but the lack of upkeep, the dust and the cobwebs, the general air of disuse, are always apparent. They are characteristic, these temples, of the doctrine they represent, the high ideals and excellent theories travestied by the empty rites and ceremonies, and the neglect of all those precepts which happen to be inconvenient. As one eminent authority has said, "the answer to Confucianism is China."

. . . . . .

I started back across country, taking rather a different route to the one I had come by, and wondering how I should get on now that I was all by "my wild lones," and had not even a servant in attendance; but it was hoped that I should arrive that night at Taiku, one hundred "li" off, where Americans were living who would probably take pity on me for the night, and the next day, all being well, I should catch the one train of the day at Ütsi and go on to Tai Yüen Fu. I travelled in a hooded cart this time, harnessed to a couple of mules, the front one of which had a way of

going off on its own account, and at one time, when we were passing through a grove of trees, it got its ropes entangled round a trunk, and plunging furiously, nearly upset the whole concern.

As the day closed in we were out again on the open plain, and still far from Taiku. The moon shone through upon us, and we plodded on steadily and silently. In order to keep from the men the slenderness of my Chinese vocabulary I refrained from any attempt at conversation, and for hours together my companions never uttered a syllable except an occasional "Te, te, te," or "Üeh, üeh, üeh" to the mules.

A few months ago I should not have thought it possible to be travelling all alone with a couple of Chinese carters across that very province which was blackened by the cruellest deeds of horror in 1900. And now I am here nothing could be more peaceful, though for how long? Nobody knows, but meanwhile progress is the order of the day. The railway, which now goes only as far as Tai Yüen Fu, is "man man tih" (later on) to be carried through the province, and Shansi has a great future before it. An authority on matters of the kind maintains that there is enough coal in Shansi to supply the whole world for thousands of years; probably also enough iron as well, and other minerals besides. The Imperial Government is at last taking steps on its own account to find out the extent of its riches. Whether the Azure Dragon and the White Tiger will

A SHANSI CART

still interfere with mining operations remains to be seen.

We reached Taiku that night.

"You are late!" said the gate-keeper of the American compound as he flung open the gates. We drove through a bit of grass-land and drew up outside a two-storied foreign house.

Then followed a transformation scene from the old world to the new. The curtain fell on the rough mule-cart standing forlornly in the cold moonlight outside the silent walls of the ancient city, and rose on a merry little supper-party of two Americans and myself in a cosy, lamplit American room, warmed by a giant American stove.

The next night was a sad contrast. I had meant to be back at Tai Yüen, but the best-laid plans of mice and men "gang aft agley," and I am not sure that *my* plans either were so particularly well laid. I had seventy "li" to do over indifferent roads or no roads at all, and a train to catch which went any time between four and six!

At one o'clock we were only half-way, halting at a crowded inn for the mules to be fed. A young man of superior class espoused my cause, and helped me explain matters to the carters and to hurry them on. I ordered hot water with which to wash, and the young man produced from his pocket a capacious coloured handkerchief and offered it for a towel! I thanked him and explained I had everything I needed. He was determined, however, that I should accept something,

and forthwith produced a foreign cigarette case from his pocket and asked if I smoked. Failing in that also, he fetched a handful of " English *lump* sugar "—a rare sight in these parts—and to gratify him I accepted a couple of lumps, and clambered back into my cart eating them. I felt like some Zoological specimen nibbling at sugar through the bars of my cage, while an admiring crowd stood and watched.

The young man transgressed all rules of Chinese propriety by helping me into the cart and arranging the rugs, etc. It was evident that somewhere or other he had seen something of the Westerners and their ways, and instead of feeling contempt, wished to emulate.

That last thirty-five " li " to Ütsi was the most exciting ride I have had. The mules were forced into a trot. I had to hold on with both hands to keep myself from being pitched against the side of the cart. As it was, I got many hard knocks and painful jerks. We bounded over stones, carried away bits of walls as we banged round corners, and almost capsized into deep ruts and ditches. Had we been left to ourselves we should have achieved our purpose, but the rule of the road in this land of opposites is that the light vehicles give way to the heavy, and the nearer we got to Ütsi the more heavy traffic did we meet. Time and time again we had to draw up and possess our souls in patience while a lumbering bullock wagon crawled at the slow pace of a reluctant cat

along a road on which there was only room for one vehicle at a time.

As to the streets of Utsi, they were densely blocked by carts and wheelbarrows. Imagine trying to catch a train under these circumstances! Well, we missed it by five minutes and had to wait twenty-four hours for another!

There was nothing for it but to go to an inn. I chose one just outside the city gates and near the railway, which looked promising, and asked for the best room. "It was too large for me," they said; but I insisted, knowing I should have to pay for it in any case, and found myself finally in a spacious apartment, with two big "kêngs" and a table.

I ordered "hsi fan" (wet rice) from the kitchen, and supped with an admiring audience looking on. Then I barred the door with its wooden bar—there are no locks to these inn doors in China, at least I have never seen any—and made up my bed on the "kêng," and fell asleep to the sound of men and mules coming and going, harnessing and unharnessing in the courtyard.

Some hours later I woke with a start to feel a stealthy footstep creeping over me with the soft, cautious tread of a cat. Fortunately, when I shook the bedclothes no opposition was offered, but by the scratching and scraping sounds on the other side of my pillow I realised that I had fellow-companions on the "kêng" in the shape of rats. I dared not light the candle for fear I might see more than I bargained

for, and pulling a knitted shawl over my head and face as a precautionary measure, I fell asleep again.

They were bold creatures, these rats. The next day I saw first one and then another taking its morning constitutional quite regardless of my presence. I complained to the inn servant. He smiled. Those were little rats, he said, and of no consequence. They had large ones sometimes, twice the size of those!

The second week in November found me on my way back to Chefoo. I had intended paying another visit to Peking, but was prevented at the last minute. Little did we any of us know then that the dreaded shadow of death was hovering darkly over the portals of the Forbidden City.

> "Le garde qui vieille aux barrières du Louvre
> N'en defend point nos roi."

On the 15th November the news arrived.

The Emperor of China is dead! The flags are at half-mast and the Chinese are smiling. They tell the news one to the other and smile as they do so. Not because they are rejoicing over the evil tidings, far from it, but the fact has often been remarked that at the sight of a coffin and at the mention of death the faces of most Celestials will lighten with a smile. Some say this is merely the effect of nervousness. One wonders whether originally it was a trick by which they sought to deceive the gods. By feigning indifference the disembodied spirits might pass

them by. When witnessing an execution, I am told, they clap their hands and laugh in order to frighten the spirit away. Yet with strange inconsistency many of these very people will go provided with a piece of bread, and when the head is severed from the body, rush forward and dip the bread in the blood and devour it greedily, in order to absorb a little of the courage and daring of the man executed!

This morning it was reported that the Emperor was dead, and this evening the news runs that the Dowager-Empress has died also.

The Chinese go on smiling.

But everybody else asks what has happened.

From the Chinese point of view the matter came about quite naturally. The Empress, who has been suffering from dysentery, or so it is said, knew that her own life was drawing to an end, and simply gave orders to the court physicians that the Emperor's death should precede her own.

But the secret has been well kept, and the silence of death lies unbroken behind those double ramparts —" d'un rouge de sang "—of the Forbidden City.

With these two royal names at the head of the list the death-roll increases rapidly.

Report goes that Yuan shï Kai, probably the most powerful official in China, has been assassinated; that Yuan shï Kai's household, forty-one persons in all, have been put to death; furthermore, that Prince Kalatchin is encamped outside the gates of Peking with thousands of Mongolian troops, that malcontents

are burning down houses in the city, and that Pu Yi, the Emperor's nephew, a three-year-old child, has been elected heir to the throne by the deceased Empress.

Meanwhile the Chinese go about their work as usual, displaying no interest whatever in the subject. Dubiousness is the golden rule. It is held to be unlucky to say anything for certain, and to announce the bald fact that the Emperor is *dead* would be the height of impropriety. He has " ascended the dragon throne above " or " been received as a guest on high," if you like, but the " sï " (dead) must not be used. I found myself saying it once in Tai Yüen Fu, referring to a relation of my own, and was quickly informed of my mistake. I might say " passed over " or " gone out of the world," or something of that kind, but never " sï " (dead) of anyone of whom I wished to speak with respect!

There is no longer any doubt, however, that both Emperor and Dowager-Empress *are* dead, and the whole country has gone into mourning, which means that the red buttons of the men's caps are changed to blue buttons or white, and for one hundred days all men must desist from shaving. Barbers, meanwhile, are being given three thousand " cash " a month by the Government in compensation.

The rumours from Peking have died down like a bonfire from lack of fuel. Yuan shï Kai and his family are unharmed, though who shall say for how long? Pu Yi, the baby Emperor, has ascended the

throne, or " divine utensil " as it is often called, under the name of Hsüan Tung, and issued his first imperial decree ! Honours are to be conferred on many of his subjects—nobles, soldiers, agriculturists, and so forth —and a button of the seventh rank awarded to all over one hundred years old, and one of the sixth rank to any who have attained the age of one hundred and twenty ! The Regent, Hsüan Tung's father, is, so they say, an able and enlightened man. It is well that he is so, for China in the throes of a new birth will need all the wisdom she can get. And the anti-dynastic parties with which the country is riddled, what of them ? You may well ask. As far as one can make out they are smiling like the rest, but nobody knows what they are thinking.

At Gankin, on the Yangtse, where the anti-dynastic feeling is especially strong, the soldiers have mutinied, but the last news gives out that the rebellion has been quelled and the ringleaders beheaded.

Through the northern province of Shansi a " Luh peh Li Chï " (a six hundred " li " messenger) was sent from Peking to the various cities bearing an imperial command that all revolutionaries should be beheaded. These " Luh peh Li Chï " are recognised by the bundle of singed feathers stuck in a conspicuous position on the packet of despatches which they carry on their backs. They go for six hundred " li " without stopping. All city gates throughout the empire must be opened at any hour of the day or night to let them through, and if anyone causes

delay to these royal messengers they can be instantly beheaded.

Next week I hope to go on to Nanking, the old Ming capital and a hot-bed of anti-dynastic societies; but the country is perfectly quiet, say the foreigners, and the Chinese say nothing.

Yours,

V.

NANKING,

December, 1908.

The Shanghai-Nanking Railway, opened a few months ago, belongs to an English company, and seems up till now to have won favour in the eyes of the Chinese. It goes in more for comfort than speed ; one hundred and ninety miles from Shanghai to Nanking in nine hours can hardly be called quick travelling, but even the second-class passenger is provided with every luxury. Breakfast, lunch, dinner—anything you like, in Chinese style or foreign, can be served at any time. A newspaper "boy" patrols the train, and at short intervals cloths steamed in boiling water are brought round with which to wipe one's face and hands !

Every fifteen minutes or so we drew up at a brand-new station—a miniature house with a bright red roof, bright green shutters, and a white paling on a tiny platform—like a thing out of a box of toys, and glided on again through long level tracts of highly cultivated, highly monotonous country. The everlasting fields, divided the one from the other by strips of brown turf, reminded me of lengths of green paper, ruled and lined, and the lines were the brown turf.

It was difficult to realise that this was China, except

at those moments when the great black wall of an invisible city, some miles in extent, blocked one's view of the sky-line; or a pagoda in the far distance warned one of the "Azure Dragon"; or a buffalo dragging a plough, followed by a man in the inevitable blue cotton cloth, gave a touch of characteristic life and colour to the otherwise desolate scene.

The city of Nanking has a glorious past and a great future, but rather a meagre present. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, and again in the fourteenth, it was the capital of China, and its manufactures of silk, satin, cotton, rags—or rather paper—are still held in such great repute that all over the country articles superior in workmanship to the common run are spoken of as "coming from Nanking," though the chances are that they have never been near the place.

In point of climate Nanking has nothing to boast of. It lies on a plain which some people call a half-drained marsh. One hears of strange maladies—a disease, for instance, called "the *Sand*," a species of blood-poisoning which the natives cure, or pretend to cure, by cicatrising the least fleshy parts of the body with a copper "cash."

I have only lately realised the medicinal properties of a copper "cash." To suck one—steadily and carefully—in the early stages of cholera will prove a sure and certain remedy! By way of proof, my informant assured me that cholera was wholly unknown in the East amongst brass and copper-workers!

It was a grey, cold winter's day when we sallied forth to see all that remains of Nanking's former glory—the tomb of Hung Wu, the Ming Emperor. In his day the city walls were thirty-five miles round. The great area enclosed, however, was by no means entirely built over, and in the time of the Tai Ping Rebellion a large part of the old city was utterly destroyed.

We passed along the narrow sunless streets, where people huddled up in wadded garments stood around the cheerless little dank, dark shops. We lingered a moment by the gateways of the Viceroy's Yamen —fragile structures of painted wood, like signboards mounted on stilts—and looked in at the crowd that hummed around the inner gates—the Chinese soldiers in Western garb, the Western carriages in Chinese garb, the merchants in silk and furs, the coolies in blue calico, the melancholy ponies, and the " East Sea Kingdom chairs," as rickshaws are called in the land of the Celestials.

We crossed the Manchu town of squat little grey houses in straight rows along roads planted with trees, and came to that scene of desolation—the ruined city of a fallen dynasty. In these days it is nothing but a dreary waste of broken stones and crumbled walls, a " valley of dry bones " blackened by age and weather, and all that remains of the imperial palace of the Ming Emperors is a grand old archway falling into decay, but still imposing, and a solid stone building like a farmer's granary, in which the re-

fractory wives used to be imprisoned, and which—oh, irony of fate—is now used as a gunpowder factory!

From this city of the dead and gone, over which the grey shadows of death are creeping, we passed out on to the undulating grass-land, devoid of human habitations, and scanned the distance in search of that which we had come to see—the tomb of Hung Wu, the Emperor.

But there was no sign of anything to break the monotony of the scene save a herd of donkeys and their eager owners, who gathered round us, making a formidable barricade of their animals across the path.

"Chi go Lütsze Ba!" * they shouted in deafening chorus, and with characteristic persistence a detachment of them accompanied us the whole way in the hope of scoring a victory in the end, and by proffering information at the right moment secured a proprietary right over our movements, and laid us under an obligation which they well knew would be fulfilled sooner or later.

A mile and a half across the plain brought us to an avenue of stone animals—monster camels, elephants, lions, and some queer beast which the donkey-boys explained was a dolphin—all ten and a half feet high, carved out of solid blocks. They were in double pairs—one pair kneeling, the other standing—and the avenue culminated in a gigantic stone turtle under a

* "Won't you have a donkey to ride?"

AVENUE OF STONE ANIMALS, NANKING

roof, bearing on its back a huge tablet. These stone turtles (creatures doomed to spend their existence weighed down by the burden of heavy tablets) are called by the Chinese "Pi Ti," the meaning of the word being, "one who has to bear much sorrow."

"But where," we asked, "is the tomb?"

The donkey-boys indicated the barren moorland hills to the east of us. We made our way in that direction, and found ourselves passing along still another avenue of stone images—not animals this time, but giant warriors in armour guarding the way, standing like pillars of salt on the plain of Sodom, and ending again in a stone turtle, roofed over and bearing a tablet.

On the top of a flight of steps a deserted temple, a hollow, wind-swept place, containing an ancestral tablet over a daïs, made us think we must have arrived at last.

"And the tomb?" we asked.

Further on, they said; and descending through paved courtyards and through temple gates, we found ourselves at the entrance of that which appeared to be a tunnel.

The donkey-boys indicated that we should enter. A kind of subway on a steep inclined plane led us out into a ruined building on a higher level.

"And where is the tomb?" we asked.

The most intelligent of our companions waved his hand majestically towards the wooded hill rising

steeply just ahead of us, and entered into a voluble explanation only a few words of which did we understand.

We had arrived—so much was clear—and later on the mystery was solved.

For some strange reason the burial-place of Hung Wu, the Emperor who died more than five hundred years ago, was never to be divulged.

The wooded hill, composed of soil from the eighteen provinces of China—according to tradition—has held its secret through the years. All those who assisted in the burial ceremony were beheaded then and there, in order that none should ever know the exact spot of the imperial tomb!

In later days—as short a time back as 1901—a different method was resorted to in order to ensure secrecy. When, after the Boxer Rebellion, enquiries were set on foot with a view to the punishment of offenders, the miscreants guarded themselves to the best of their ability by having the tongues cut out of those men who could have given recriminating evidence.

The Temple of Ten Thousand Gods in the midst of the city, built twenty years ago, was a crude contrast to the ancient ruins of Nanking. Gilded images of the Goddess of Mercy, large and small, but mostly small, were there in their thousands, lining the walls from floor to ceiling, covering the roof, resting on the beams, swarming here, there, and everywhere, like a pest of gilded locusts held spell-bound. A young

STONE FIGURES, NANKING

Buddhist priest, with an intellectual face, stood guard over them, and enquired with interest where we had come from.

"Our unworthy kingdom is England," we answered.

"Ah! is that so? And the idols, too, come from England!" he said, in the tone of one who would pay a compliment.

. . . . . .

At Chinkiang, two hours by rail from Nanking on the way back to Shanghai, the Grand Canal flows into the Yangtse, and at Chinkiang we started forth on a steam launch to the city of Yangcheo. The only available first-class cabin was like a large egg-box. We were packed into it with a couple of bulky Chinese in wadded silks and satins, two Chinese ladies, and a child the shape of an extenuated bolster in its padded garments. The tiny slits of windows were too high up to see out of, there was no room to open the door, and to intensify the discomfort one of the native ladies coughed ominously with a view to being sea-sick.

At Yangcheo, after two hours in the "egg-box," excitement became intense. The rule on these occasions seems to be, "Each for himself, and the d—l take the hindermost." Everybody shouts at once, and he who can bawl louder than his fellow wins.

Yangcheo is one of the largest cities in this part of China, and is a favourite place for retired officials

and merchants, who come hither and fritter their substance away in idle pleasures. There was only an apology for a landing-stage. A greasy plank connected the launch with a flight of slippery, rickety steps climbing a steep mud-bank. On the steps a howling mob tried to board the launch; on the launch a howling mob tried to board the steps!

I had forced my way on deck in order to "keep an eye" on the luggage, and found myself nearly pushed overboard by two combatants. Below stairs a still fiercer fight was going on; one man had got another down and was jumping wildly on his chest, and all for the sake of a few "cash" of "wine money" which a passenger had declined to give to the "steward."

Fortunately a servant had been sent to meet us. We saw him at the back of the crowd waving an English letter as a signal, and leaving him to extricate our luggage as best he could, we climbed into sedan-chairs and were borne swiftly away from the pandemonium on the shore—through back streets silent and vault-like, winding in and out between high walls, till we came to the busy thoroughfares hung with shop-signs—red, yellow, black, emerald green, and royal blue—and fantastic lanterns—crimson and gold—which swayed above the heads of stately Celestials in silk and fur, stepping ponderously along, and hurrying coolies, chanting lustily, bearing heavy burdens on bamboo poles, and keeping time with their feet to the see-sawing tune of the chant.

From a Photograph by A. R. Saunders

FIVE-ROOFED BRIDGE AT YANGCHEO

To quote a translation I came across the other day of some Chinese lines :—

"Books, drawings, chess and music with odes and wine and flowers,
These pleasures seven were once the joy of rich men's leisure hours ;
But now the tune of life is pitched to a totally different key,
'Tis only fuel and rice and oil, salt, vinegar sauces, and tea!"

And to these one should add—"and the opium pipe and the dice."

Amongst the wealthier classes the ladies have little or no education and no useful occupations, and Yangcheo apparently shows no desire to emulate other cities of China in the pursuit of Western learning. The Yangcheo people go on in their old way absolutely content, but even so the town gives one the impression of prosperity. The main streets, seven feet wide, are stirring with life and ablaze with colour. Those who can afford to do so ride in sedan-chairs, the others patronise the wheelbarrow, and their dignity on those occasions was my "envy and despair." I sat on the little ledge by the side of the wheel and was bumped ruthlessly up and down. My coat kept trailing in the mud, and I had to hold on to keep from falling off as we rattled over the broken flagstones and tumbled in and out of ruts.

The smaller streets are hardly more than four feet wide, creeping along between high white walls, reminding one of passages in a cellar.

The Grand Canal, Yangcheo's link with the outer world, has been in existence, I suppose, for more than six hundred years, and is as useful now as ever it was. On my way back to Chinkiang I had an "egg-box" to myself, and could see all there was to be seen of the mud-coloured river low down between steep mud-coloured banks, on the top of which every now and again a row of peasants showed up against the ky, towing a haystack floating on the water, which turned out on closer inspection to be a cargo-boat filled with straw, but the boat itself was so heavily laden as to be practically invisible.

HANGCHEO,

January, 1909.

We are on our way to one of the *two* cities of China. According to a Chinese proverb: "Heaven is above and Hangcheo and Sucheo lie below." The Hangcheo train, as they call it, from Shanghai to Hangcheo, consists of a number of passenger barges strung together, one behind the other, and towed by a small steam-launch. The boats are provided with cabins of the nature of fowl-houses. You struggle into them through a door about three feet high, and plunge down a steep ladder into their darksome depths. Most of them contain two berths on either side and a table across the end. On the roof of the cabins the third-class passengers "roost." They sit huddled up in their wadded clothes like hens on a perch with their feathers fluffed out, and eye us solemnly, much as a row of hens would turn suspicious eyes on intruders.

Gliding down the Sucheo creek into the Huang Pu River on that winter's evening we saw Shanghai in a new light. Hovels of the Middle Ages, with gilded shop-signs and crimson lanterns, side by side with European buildings crude and gigantic, picturesque

junks with tawny sails and gorgeously painted woodwork, and modern gunboats and merchant steamers plain and solid—the old and the new "smudged" together into one glorious "Turneresque" picture of a fiery sunset smouldering 'midst clouds of smoke, and smoke-like clouds in sky and water.

. . . . . .

For twenty-four hours we must travel in this Hangcheo "train," a good eight hours of which, however, have been absorbed by the night. The "fowl-house" proves a more comfortable room than we anticipated, and Wu Ma, our new servant, attends carefully to all our wants.

It is a cold, sunless day; the wind shivers through the leafless trees on the banks of the Grand Canal, into which we have now found our way. It is more picturesque here than it was near Yangcheo, and meanders along past banks studded with orchards of mulberry trees, bare now and scraggy, varied by clumps of fir and bamboo thickets. Now and again a large grey stone "Noah's ark" crops up unexpectedly on the bank, and turns out to be a grave. At fairly frequent intervals a village comes in sight. The clustering houses look down long flights of steps into the water. The most striking feature of the place is usually a stone bridge, rising high in the centre and towering above the low white plastered buildings on the shore.

The Hangcheo "train" is long and unwieldy, and

every now and then its tail gets jammed against a bridge, or hung up round a corner. It is dark before we arrive, and too late, according to Wu Ma, to get into the city that night.

Hangcheo you must know has gone one better than its rival city of Sucheo and has started the first genuinely Chinese railway in the whole of China —financed by the Chinese, built by the Chinese, and run by the Chinese. True, at present it only runs for a few miles, but it calls itself by the name of the province, and means to do great things in the future. Its ways are peculiar to itself. When the train is sufficiently full it starts off, irrespective of the fact that the appointed hour on the time-table has not yet arrived, and on one occasion an ardent passenger was considerably baffled by hearing that the train would not run that day because there were so few people! It is said that the "Company" is feathering its own nest, that instead of paying handsomely for the land, they more or less commandeered it—"bought" a good deal more than they needed and are selling it at a profit.

We amused ourselves reading the notices put up in *English* and Chinese in the carriages.

"Only *petty* things and hand-baggage are allowed —and people who are dirty, sick, mad, or drunken are not to be admitted," and so forth.

The train landed us outside the city gates, but report goes that ere long the sacred precincts of the city itself are to be invaded by the "iron road" and

the "fire carriage," which proves how "advanced" Hangcheo has become.

You would be amused to see our dwelling-place—a suite of half-furnished rooms over a boys' school, and the school is in charge of a native pastor who, with his wife and family, live in the adjoining house, and who treat us in some measure as their own guests. I welcome the fact that we are not absolutely staying with them in their own abode. They are kindness itself; but as the greatest politeness a Chinese hostess can show her guest is to share her room with her at night, I think we are more comfortable as we are. We have brought with us all that is necessary—bedding, washing basins, cooking utensils, and foreign food and foot-stoves, and Wu Ma, for a penny or so, has purchased himself a thing made of burnt clay called a wind-stove, on which he does our cooking.

Fortunately we are out a good deal, otherwise we might find the unceasing din of the recitations in the schoolroom below stairs a little trying. Between us and the boys we have only a few slender planks of wood somewhat cracked and decayed. Soon after daybreak they start their Herculean task—learning by heart and out loud a series of text-books, beginning, probably, with the *Trimetrical Classic*, continuing with the *Century of Surnames*, going on with the book of the thousand characters and the odes for children, *Ten Canons of Filial Duty*, and the *Juvenile Instructor*. Picture a dozen boys or more, each learn-

WESTERN LAKE, HANGCHEO

ing his own lesson out loud, some shouting in the treble, some shouting in the bass, some declaring, "All men at the beginning have a virtuous nature," others chanting, "If one does not learn, one is inferior to animals and insects," and a third section droning forth, "Humanity, justice, propriety, wisdom, and truth, these five cardinal virtues are not to be confused." *

We presume they must have stopped sometimes for meals, but the interval was hardly noticeable.

Hangcheo, renowned for its beauty by writers old and new, is a city of white-walled buildings massed around the "Hill of the Golden King" on the shores of enchanted seas. The hill is wooded from base to summit and crowned by a Buddhist temple. Looking down from its heights over the wide expanse of houses stretched out on the flat, one is irresistibly reminded of some gigantic bed of mushrooms, by the white walls and black roofs pressed closely together, the white predominating. Out to the west the wonderful Western Lake (said to be twelve miles round) lies asleep amongst shadowy blue hills, and in front of us, hardly more than a mile away, an open stretch of sky and haze betokens the sea

Our "mushroom beds" turned into noisy streets. We rode through them in sedan-chairs, and our chair-bearers, racing through the crowd, kept up

* These are the books used in an ordinary Chinese school. Probably, in the case of the Hangcheo scholars, Western literature played a part in the curriculum.

a continuous shout, calling to the people to make room for us to pass. There is no rumbling of vehicles or tramp of horses in these busy Chinese thoroughfares, but the loud, excited voices of the people, the thud, thudding of drums, beating of gongs, and rattling of rattles keep up an incessant din. Most of the street pedlars have an instrument, either musical or unmusical, a bell, gong, or rattle, by which they announce their presence.

In the midst of them all a woman ran through the crowd, tears streaming down her face, crying in agony, with a child's clothes in her arms. "Come home, come home!" she shrieked, and called the words piteously again and again. Her child must be dangerously ill, they told us, probably lying in a state of unconsciousness, and she, thinking his soul had escaped, was seeking for it through the city, calling it eagerly to return to its owner, and the clothes were a kind of bait!

Arrived on the shore of the Western Lake we stepped into a gilded barge and glided forth on the enchanted sea—so clear was the water, hardly more than two feet deep, and the wooded mountains girding the shores solemnly viewed themselves in the crystal mirror. At certain seasons of the year the glossy green of the camphor trees mingling with the purple leaves of the tallow and the dark foliage of the "arbor vitæ" make a glorious setting to this inland sea.

On a tree-clad headland the "Tower of the Thun-

TOWER OF THE THUNDERING PEAK, HANGCHEO

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dering Peak" stands in majestic solitude, just as it stood more than a thousand years ago, when Suchuen the beautiful was imprisoned beneath its walls. One hundred and twenty feet high, it is an almost solid block of masonry, chipped and crumbling a little with time, but still good for many years to come; fortunately so, say the geomancers. In the lonely glades at the foot of the hill a silent temple presides over graves without number, and in tiny rows of white-walled houses coffins are mouldering with the years. From the shores of the dead and gone our boat drifted across the silvery water to a lotus island. Over the lotus ponds a serpentine bridge of carved stone winds in and out, covering, perhaps, half a mile of ground. A Confucian temple and a famous garden of elusive paths hiding amongst rockwork are the sights of the lotus island, and out in the water of the lake close by grey stone pillars of ancient date are held in great veneration, and worshipped by the Hangcheo officials on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon.

. . . . . .

Six hundred years or so ago Hangcheo was the capital of China. The blood-red walls of the old imperial palace are still mirrored in the waters of the lake, but on the "sacred" shores below the great pagoda which "controls" the literary influences of the city, and side by side with the very pagoda itself, the houses of the Western "barbarians" have doubtless

in their time created discord between the "Azure Dragon" and the "White Tiger." But now the old and the new live together in harmony; and Hangcheo stands in the front ranks of the progressive army. The sanatorium by the side of the pagoda and the leper hospital at the foot of the hill are offshoots of the great medical work started in a small way some years ago by an English doctor, and now, thanks to his untiring energy and marvellous ability, the one small original house has been transformed into great buildings, a hospital for men, another for women, a medical college for the training of native doctors, a convalescent home, and so forth.

In the city, at the present time, properly qualified medical men, who owe their training to these Western hospitals, are engaged in practice amongst their own countrymen. The Chinese are said to be especially able surgeons, and the doctors trained in foreign schools are much in request; but prejudice dies hard. If the case goes badly the patient will often insist on calling in quack physicians as a last resource, and that, as a rule, is the end of all things.

Native methods sound ludicrous to Western ears, but in some diseases native treatment is curiously effective. As to the drug shops, their name is legion, and some of their wares are excellent. I would recommend centipedes, for instance, soaked in oil in the case of a burn, and for a tonic—elephant hide planed off into

thin strips. Moreover, there is a preparation of rats said to be most beneficial when one's hair is coming out, and pounded bones and animals' teeth are all useful in their way, to say nothing of armadillo scales used for *scratching* an irritable place. Amongst native prescriptions some doubtless are of great value, and a wide field of research stands open to the student of chemistry who is also versed in the intricacies of the language.

In China the soul is thought to reside in the liver, the emotions in the pit of the stomach, and thoughts come from the lungs. The brain seems of no consequence whatever, but the right kidney is called the "gate of life." A native doctor has to rely chiefly on the pulse for his diagnosis, and in the case of a female patient a bamboo screen blocks his vision. First the left wrist and then the right are put forth for his inspection. There are three points in each pulse pregnant with meaning. A light pressure in one case reveals the state of the stomach, and a heavy pressure the condition of the spleen, and so on through the different internal organs.

I have been told that the Dowager-Empress was attended of late years by a French physician, who, however, never saw her face to face, but was permitted to feel her pulse.

Post-mortem examinations are practically impossible in China; the people have an unspeakable dread of passing into the next world in a mutilated condition. Even a dentist (over here) must give back

the teeth he has extracted, and their owner preserves them carefully against the day of his burial. Talking of teeth reminds me of the Lanchi woman dentist, but I am coming to that later on.

We travelled to Lanchi by the Tsien Tang River, which flows within a mile of Hangcheo. "You won't like it," they all said; "the boats are the worst in China, and at this time of the year, when winds are strong, you will probably take seven days getting as far as Lanchi."

But the prophets were wrong.

True, there was a tearing wind, but it blew behind us and helped us on our way; and as to the boats, they were covered with a matting roof arched over from side to side, and were not so unlike our "wu pan" on the Yangtse, except that (and therein lies the chief discomfort) the arched roof was open at either end, making a channel for the wind, and, as Deborah aptly remarked, on the occasion of our first meal—"it was like sitting down to dinner in a draughty tunnel." At this time of the year the wind is glacial. For warmth and privacy only one thing was possible, namely a four-sided curtain, made like a small tent, to cover over each bed, and fortunately we had brought these with us.

When too cold to stand the wind in the tunnel any longer we retired to our respective tents, and sat cross-legged on silken divans like Arabian princesses, waited on by the attentive Wu Ma, who served us up dainty meals on improvised tables, brought us

basins of hot water to wash in, and filled our foot-stoves with glowing charcoal. Occasionally we emerged and looked at the view. We were being swept on by the winds along a winding river of reseda hue, between the wooded hills, feathery bamboo groves darkened by clumps of pine, to a shadowy land where mountains veiled in blue gauze faded into clouds. The men put up the sail and rested on their oars, except at those moments when the rushing sound of many waters warned them of the approach of a rapid. Then, filling the air with fiendish yells, they pressed the oars forward with their bodies, as being probably more efficacious than their hands, bending almost double in their exertions, and then suddenly, as though by magic, the shouts and the splashing of the waves ended in silence, the captain got out his pipe with a smile, nobody said a word, but one felt that a sense of relief had fallen on the company.

Thanks to the gale sweeping us on we did a record journey, three hundred and sixty "li" in three days, and Lanchi, with its white-walled houses huddled together by the waterside like a frightened flock of sheep, lay before us. A long flight of slimy wooden steps led up the steep mud-bank on the shore, and the city gates standing on the top of a second flight looked as though they had just drawn back in time to prevent themselves from falling over into the water.

Our friend of Lanchi—Ba Kiaotsi, as Wu Ma

called her—came down the steps to meet us. She was the only Westerner in the whole city just at that time, and so well known and highly thought of, that with her for a guide we felt that the people who thronged to look at us in the streets eyed the "foreign barbarians" with less contempt than usual. The mud lay an inch or more thick on the steps climbing up to the city gates, and flooded in a stagnant stream the narrow, arcade-like streets. The sky was practically non-existent, and instead of it, gay lanterns of poppy red, resplendent shop-signs, black and gold and royal blue, inscribed with gilt lettering, made one long blaze of colour as far as the eye could reach. The reds and golds of the oranges and pumelos, the scarlet chillies and crimson "iang-mei," the clothes shops, in which brocaded gowns in purple, amethyst, blue, and imperial yellow were suspended like gay banners from aloft, the copper-ware burnished and beautiful, and the stately drug stores, the finest of all in outward appearance, and with no apparent stock-in-trade, save a few handsome jars of delicate porcelain—all played a part in the wonderful scheme of colour. Once or twice the crowd pressed too closely on our heels. The mild remark, "I fear your parents died too early," made in polite tones, instantly dispersed the aggressors! They had "lost face" in the eyes of the crowd, who laughed at their discomfiture. We passed a shaven Buddhist priest, in his grey gown, who was accumulating merit in the next world by going down on his knees every few

minutes in the black slime, and a little further on at a street corner a woman dentist stood awaiting custom. She wore a chop-stick in her hair, the sign of her trade. By clever manipulation of a decayed tooth with the chop-stick she extracts a tiny worm, of the nature of a maggot, whereupon the sufferer, relieved of pain, goes away rejoicing. How the worm is produced nobody knows. I imagine the same worm has to officiate on all occasions. But far more curious than the worm treatment is some extraordinary drug used in the form of a powder by a native dentist of the neighbourhood. When well rubbed into the gum of a decayed tooth it so loosens the fangs that they practically come out of their own accord.

Nobody knows what the drug can be, and it is said that the use of it has a harmful effect on the rest of the teeth.

Leaving the streets behind us, we passed out amongst the graves. On some of the grass-grown mounds a handful of white lime had been placed by those who were doing good deeds with a view to the next world and worshipping at the graves of those who had no belongings of their own. Here and there we came across an unburied coffin, but the lime and charcoal with which it was partly filled prevented any insanitary odour.

We climbed the hillside, which later on will be covered with azaleas and lilies, and gathered a few violets and looked down over the surrounding country

—the city of Lanchi, far below us, the white patches of the many walls reminding one of some gigantic washing-ground, in which white sheets were spread out to dry. Beyond it the Tsien Tang River, cold and grey, branching out into a fork just above the town, meandered away between wide sandy shores round the foot of the hills.

Descending by steps worn to the smoothness of ice by many generations of feet, we looked in at the temple of the "King of Hell," a dreary, neglected place, with dust instead of paint on the wooden images and on the doors and the pillars. Strange shadowy images peopled the nooks and corners, the remnants of the idols. There is a project on foot to subscribe five thousand dollars towards the renovation of this dismal abode. The authorities, however, are not at one in the matter. There are some who wish the money to be given to our friend Ba Kiaotsi for the establishment of an opium refuge. The question has yet to be decided, but Ba Kiaotsi thinks the "King of Hell" will win.

Our hostess's medical knowledge has won her fame in every part of Lanchi. She took me with her to the house of one of her patients, the wife of a mandarin. Former experiences of wealthy Chinese mansions have taught me that the more one expects, the less one will probably find. From the narrow street of black mud and closely packed houses we stepped through palatial gates into a dirty outer courtyard, where an orange stall was set up. We

passed from courtyard to courtyard, the inner ones cleaner than the outer, occasional pots of flowers and bits of rockwork suggesting a garden. One-storied buildings, like so many pavilions, surrounded the courtyards and formed the living-rooms of the six sons and their wives, and doubtless of many other relations as well.

We were invited through to the bedroom of the little "Tai Tai," the wife of the sixth son, whom Ba Kiaotsi had come to see.

It was a narrow room built like a long passage, and seemed literally packed with women; how many were "Tai Tai's," how many were merely attendants, it was at first difficult to make out.

I discovered the patient to be the minute lady with thickly powdered face and immaculately dressed hair, who was sitting at a table placed against the wall, feeding herself with her chop-sticks from a variety of tiny basins full of savoury chopped meats and gravies, and displaying an appetite uncommonly good for an invalid.

I am told that one of the few things about Westerners that the Chinese really admire is the way in which a family party can sit down to dinner and partake of the same dishes without discord.

In a Chinese family each member likes his own vegetables, pickles, sauces, etc., and each requires something different to the others. We, the Westerners, they say, have more crockery on our tables, but they, the Chinese, have more food.

The invalid with the chop-sticks looked listless and disinclined to talk. It appeared to me the servants did most of the conversation, and to my surprise, nobody asked me my honourable age and the number of my sons. All interest was centred in my clothes, which, of course, I explained were "contemptible foreign things" and came from "my unworthy country, England." The "Tai Tai" quite brightened up over the question of the clothes, and became radiant when Ba Kiaotsi diagnosed her complaint as non-serious. They thanked her most effusively, and clung affectionately to her as she said good-bye, and extended their gratitude even to me. "Walk slowly," they said, "Sit slowly," said we, and left as honoured guests. It was, therefore, rather a shock to me to see the family altar all ablaze with candles and incense on our way out, and to be told (afterwards) that it was done in self-defence, to combat any evil influences we might have left behind.

As we retraced our steps through the city we came to a little lakelet enclosed by the walls of houses, silent and peaceful, nestling in this secluded out-of-the-way corner. But the stillness was the silence of death.

It was getting dark, and even as we passed in the shadow a crouching figure moved forward close to the wall, and slipped away again when she saw she was not alone.

It is said they come to this silent pool to drown

OUR BOAT ON THE TSIEN TANG RIVER

A TAILOR IN BA KIAO TSI'S HOUSE

the poor girl-babies who are not wanted. Sometimes it is only a case of burial, but at others—and one thought of Victor Hugo's words in *Les Misérables* :—

> " Est-ce qu'ils étaient touts morts ?
> On dit que non."

But to turn to more cheerful subjects.

We have been investing in some Chinese coats made by an excellent Lanchi tailor. He worked here at the house, provided his own food, and charged fivepence a day. An astute observer of the Chinese says that they seem to be able to do almost everything by means of almost nothing. All I got for my tailor was a length of silk. He arrived with his paste-pot, his iron, his needle and thread, and his " grey mouse "—in other words, a tiny bag the size of a mouse filled with chalk, through which a little cord is drawn, in order to mark out seams to be cut. In true contrariwise fashion, Chinese tailors chalk the table and not the material, and place the latter in the chalked-out divisions. Their accurate calculations, resulting in great economy of cloth, would be a lesson to many a cutter-out in Western lands. Finally, after about three days' work, behold a dainty garment complete in every detail—the buttons, cords, braided trimming, etc., etc., have all been evolved from the one length of silk plus the paste-pot and the iron and Chinese ingenuity.

As we went back to our boat, moored amidst

the bamboo rafts at the foot of the wooden steps, an intelligent-looking man stopped Ba Kiaotsi to ask a question concerning these two strange foreign ladies.

"Do those feathers" (they were really quills) "in their hats mean that they have official degrees?" he asked; "and which is the highest rank, the blue or the white?"

After all, the question was not so absurd in a country where different-coloured buttons worn on the caps show the rank of the wearer and a peacock's feather is one of the highest honours.

Close to the landing-stage a small wooden house had just been erected for the reception of the dead body of one of Ba Kiaotsi's neighbours. He was the prosperous owner of a cracker shop and had died suddenly on a boat coming up from Hangcheo. This had meant enormous expense to the bereaved family. First the boatmen had been heavily compensated; they could expect no more passengers that year, after a death on their boat; and then this temporary abode for the coffin had had to be built, as it is unlucky in the highest degree to take a corpse into a house, and no city will allow one to be brought within its gates.

As we drifted down river our last sight of Lanchi was of the cracker-maker's mortuary chapel and Ba Kiaotsi standing waving a farewell on the top of the steps, whilst the cook and the teacher and the table boy stood like solemn sphinxes eyeing the

departing guests. The sun was out in all its splendour, the silver-spangled river dipped down between green hills shaded by spreading camphor trees, but the tops of the mountains were wreathed in snow.

SHANGHAI,

February, 1909.

New Year's Day, January the twenty-third, found us back in Shanghai. The native city is like a disturbed ant-heap. A recent snowfall has made everyone happy, for snow at this season is looked upon as an omen of good fortune in the coming year. At the temple of the city god those who can afford to do so are making supreme efforts to secure the favour of the hidden powers. They have brought with them long strings of silver money and bunches of red candles. The gogs and magogs of painted wood guarding the doors have their share of the spoil. Great bonfires of the tinfoil "silver" are burning fiercely in front of them, and first one worshipper and then another steps forward hastily, flinging new strings of this strange coinage on the burning pile, and as the flames leap up, licking in this fresh fuel, the donor turns away with a sense of relief. He has not only propitiated the god of his city, but also squared his attendants down in Hades, and by so doing has doubtless been of assistance to the spirits of his deceased relatives, and saved them maybe

from the merciless hands of the phantom Yamen runners.

The interior of the temple, usually dark and deserted, is ablaze with candles, the air heavy with incense; the crowd is surging back and forth and there is hardly room to stand. Portly citizens in rich furs and costly brocades are "ko teo-ing" many times in succession before the brilliantly lighted altar, praying probably for sons and riches, long life and honour, and one after another shakes a bamboo box full of wooden labels until one jumps out from amongst the rest. This is then carried to a priest, who sits behind a tiny counter in the shadow near by. In exchange for it he hands back a yellow slip of paper, on which is shadowed forth in mystical language the luck or ill-luck of the coming year. A young man resplendent in superb silk garments had just tried his fate as we approached. He read down the slip of paper and his face fell.

"Good or not good?" we asked.

"Not good," he answered, and taking up the bamboo box once more, he tried his luck again.

Out in the courts of the temple the crowd waxed thicker than ever, and in every nook and corner gambling in some form or other was going on. A fortune-teller with his bird pursued a thriving trade. We watched them with amusement. A slim little canary, with a sagacious tilt of the head, eyed his master's client knowingly, then hopped down the table, picked out a slip of paper from the pack, and

was rewarded by the present of a seed, whilst the enigmatical sentence inscribed upon the paper was listened to as the voice of the gods.

A devout Chinese will sometimes keep a "moral account book." There is a volume called *The Rules of Merit and Transgression*, in which the commercial value of deeds is given. For instance: To pay the debts of a father counts ten to the good. To worship at his burial fifty. And to *bury a bird* or *lend an umbrella* one. On the other hand, to love a wife more than a father or mother takes off a hundred, and to dig up a worm in winter cancels the burying of a bird.

On New Year's Day, when China puts on its best clothes and goes round to "pai nien," * it is presumed that there are some of the household who stay at home to receive. I believe in most cases the ladies of the family do not pay their own calls until the fourth or fifth day of the New Year. I went to Kay's rooms to assist in dispensing tea and confectionery to her guests, and found every chair and sofa occupied by silent, well-dressed Chinese, with solemn, dignified manners. It seemed to me that some of their faces were strangely familiar. They sat sipping their tea, joining now and again in the conversation with perfect ease of manner. At last one made a move, and bowing low, with many polite expressions one after another, bade a courteous farewell. During

* Pay New Year calls.

the course of the morning I met some of them again, but they had doffed their silk gowns and were engaged in household duties, and our dignified guests were, of course, the servants of the house, who had been doing the correct thing in paying New Year calls upon us dressed in their best clothes, some of which probably had been hired or borrowed for the occasion!

A few days later there was a return of civilities on the part of the heads of the household, in the form of the Chinese equivalent of a tenants' ball—a New Year's feast, to which fifty-three people were invited. The "tsing! tsing! tsing!" * with which each one invites his neighbour to start eating always reminds me of the clucking preparatory to a meal in a poultry yard, and when once the business of eating has commenced, the ensuing silence is also reminiscent of our feathered friends.

This, however, is hardly fair on our dignified guests, who are always willing to transfer the most succulent morsels to their neighbours' mouths, and "Tsing! tsing! tsing!" before dipping their own chop-sticks into a fresh dish.

And this, I fear, will be my last Chinese meal, not that I have ever acquired a taste for the flavour of squashed lady-birds and mouse-traps, but my interest in the people themselves has increased steadily. I suppose I have fallen under that magnetic spell

* "Please! please! please!"

which has influenced, either with or against their will, so many foreign residents in China.

. . . . . .

Was it not Bacon who said : " Since things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designedly, what end will there be of evil ? "

At last there are signs that things in China *are being altered for the better designedly*. There was a time, and only a few years ago, when the Western nations gathered round the prostrate form of their Celestial neighbour and talked of his approaching end. " The decay of China," " the break-up of China," " the last days of Peking "—words such as these rang forth through the world. Like Mother Hubbard in the nursery rhyme,

> " They went out to buy him a coffin,
> And when they came back
> They found him a-laughin'."

And now they pitch their tune to a totally different key, and write of the " uplift " and " the awakening " of China, and quote a far-seeing author of fifty years ago, who, speaking of the Chinese and the old Egyptians, pointed out that they had survived the Egyptians, survived the Persians, survived the Greeks, survived the Romans, and were still there, possessing " as much youth and vitality in them as the youngest of young nations."

I have been looking back over my travels through the country, and thinking of the material which will go to make one of "three surviving nations of the future"—the untiring energy and skill of the men who have navigated the waters of the Upper Yangtse through many centuries, undismayed by difficulties and dangers; the physical vitality which enables them to live and thrive in any climate, and in "neglect of most hygienic laws"; the patience and perseverance of the gold-seekers on the rock-strewn shores of the river; the pluck and zeal of the scholars in the new Government schools, who, at the age of forty years and over, have set themselves to master a Western education; the cheerfulness of the coolies, who spend their lives in one incessant trot, weighted down by burdens; the "gift of common sense" with which, according to Sir Robert Hart, the Chinese are so richly endowed; the intellectual and financial ability, the thrift and economy out-rivalling even that of the Jews; the "talent for industry pervading all classes."

But now comes the rift in the lute. Whilst her leading statesmen say, "China needs armies, navies, arsenals; and the Westerners add, currency, railways, and scientific instruction," there is still another and deeper side to the question. I am quoting the author of *Chinese Characteristics*. "China's needs are few, they are character and conscience; nay, they are but one, for character is conscience."

But I must not "moralise" further.

We go on board the steamer to-day, and a

coolie, with his wheelbarrow, is waiting for the luggage.

To quote the closing phrase in "Glory Flower's" last letter: "Other words again discuss," and for the last time, with Chinese brush on Chinese shores, I sign myself

羅
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